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THE LEADING WOMAN

By John D. Barry

Author of "Mademoiselle Blanche," "The Intriguers," "The Princess Margarethe," etc.

I

ALL day long the company rehearsed on the dark stage. In the auditorium the carpenters were hammering, and the decorators, on the slender scaffolding, added the last touches to the walls. At five o'clock the place seemed like chaos; at six, the actors, carpenters and decorators disappeared, the scaffolding was removed and the stage stood set for the first act. Women were taking off the coverings of the seats, and on the stage two men were speaking in low tones.

"Well, I guess we're all right now," said one, a short and heavy man with a red face, patiently mopping his brow. Since eleven in the morning the thermometer in the wings had stood above ninety degrees.

The younger man was mopping, too, in a way that suggested resentment. "He's a hustler, ain't he?" he remarked.

"Hustler!" The sardonic laugh that accompanied the exclamation suggested superior knowledge and years of experience. "There's no one in the business like him. That's what's kept him where he is. Wait till you get used to him. Then you won't be surprised at anything he does."

They stood looking at each other for a moment. They seemed too hot and too tired to move.

"If you can stand him, you'll get a lot out of him. In the five years that I've been with him I've learned more about the theatrical business than I'd

learned in fifteen years before. He's got it down to a science. Why, he lives it; he eats it; he sleeps it—that is, if he ever sleeps at all. He's down at this theatre every morning at seven o'clock, and he often stays here all day and all night."

"All night!" The exclamation sounded like a gasp.

"Yes, he'll probably rehearse all night to-night—unless the piece goes better than I think it will. He doesn't think anything of calling a rehearsal after a performance that doesn't suit him, and he keeps the whole company here and the two stage-managers, though what use we are I can't imagine, since he runs the whole shooting-match himself."

The stage-manager turned and walked to the back of the theatre, and his new assistant, whose face was white and haggard from the heat and the fatigue of the day, looked discouraged. In a moment, however, the young fellow threw back his shoulders.

"Well, I can tell you one thing," he remarked. "There's such a thing as going too far, and I believe Fischer will get himself into a hole if he doesn't look out."

"What do you mean?"

The two men faced each other again.

"Didn't you notice how Nellie Wilton looked? Gee! I thought at any moment during the rehearsal of that last scene she'd drop on the stage."

The stage-manager became thoughtful. "I noticed that, too, and I thought of speaking to the Colonel

about it. But he hates to be interrupted while he's rehearsing—and he's apt to fly into a temper. He didn't see it himself; he never notices anything like that. I believe he'd force Wilton on the stage if she was going to fall dead the moment she came off. He knows she's his great card. When she was out of the bill two weeks last season we lost about five hundred dollars a night." He pulled out his watch. "I guess I'll go out and get some dinner. The Colonel has gone off with Wilton to the Waldorf-Astoria and they'll be back before seven. Devil of a night for an opening! I told the Colonel it was a mistake to begin before the first of October."

"But the house is sold out."

"Yes, it's always sold out for a first night. But what'll it be to-morrow night? People don't want heavy pieces in hot weather. All they care for is the roof gardens. But when the Colonel gets a notion into his head he's as obstinate as a mule." The stage-manager's eyes swept the dark theatre from the back of the footlights. "Well, we seem to be fixed up all right," he said, with a sigh. "Damn this weather!"

II

At seven o'clock Fischer arrived at the theatre with Miss Wilton and with Hathaway, her husband, who had joined her at dinner. Fischer was a tall, thin man with white hair, a smooth actor's face, a sallow complexion and a straight nose that did not proclaim his Jewish blood. He appeared to be in excellent spirits, for he smiled jocosely at the negro at the door, who bowed with exaggerated respect when the group entered.

"Has Thérèse come?" Miss Wilton asked.

"Oh, yas, Miss Wilton. She come a long time ago in the carriage—with a lot of boxes. I help her carry 'em into yo' dressing-room."

Miss Wilton stepped nervously into the corridor; her husband, whose

head just reached above her shoulder, hurried behind her, and Fischer turned into his private office near the entrance. None of the other actors had arrived; two scene-shifters were leaning against a pile of scenery and the electrician was experimenting with the lights.

Miss Wilton threw open a door facing the wings. The maid was hanging dresses on the backs of chairs.

"Now you go out, Jack," she said to Hathaway, as she removed her straw hat. "You'll only be in the way. Thérèse will do everything."

He looked up anxiously into her face. "How do you feel now, dear?"

"I feel a hundred years old, if you want to know," she replied, snappishly. "I'm tired to death. The Colonel has nearly killed me to-day. We rehearsed from nine till six. I don't know how I'm going to stand it." She walked to the large mirror between the two windows. "I look like a spectre," she said. "And at the beginning of the season, too. It was just my luck to be sick when I ought to have been building up my strength for the Winter. And look at my hair, will you? In a year it'll be white, and two years ago I didn't have a gray hair in my head. And those wrinkles round my eyes—no wonder they say I'm *passée*!"

She threw herself into a chair. The maid continued to work busily over the dresses, apparently hearing nothing of the conversation. "If that dizziness comes back while I'm on the stage I don't know what I shall do. I felt it this afternoon and thought I should have to stop. I wonder if I'm breaking up?" She looked at the anxious little figure standing by the door. "What do you suppose the Colonel told me before you came to the hotel?" she said. "He's engaged Mabel Bertram to do the heavies."

The little man kept looking at her as if he expected her to continue. "Well, what of it?" he said at last.

"What of it? Don't you know that Mabel Bertram is at least fifteen years younger than I am and one of the

prettiest women on the stage? I saw her in Baltimore last Winter. She was doing stock work. She's crazy to get a chance here in New York. She's been pestering the Colonel with letters for a year."

He did not pretend to misunderstand any longer. "She can't act," he said.

"Can't she? H'm! If she couldn't, the Colonel would teach her. He can teach a broomstick to act. I know what he wants her for. He thinks if I give out before the season's over he can shove her into my place. He didn't dare to tell me she'd signed with him till the contract was made."

"When was it made?" the little man asked, quietly.

"The day after I came back to town—when he saw how seedy I was. Oh, I'm onto his tricks. But she'll make the greatest mistake of her life if she thinks she can oust me. I'll play every night of the season if it kills me."

"But I thought you said she'd been engaged for the 'heavies.'"

"That's just a bluff of the Colonel's. When she comes here she'll get my understudies, don't you see? But she'll have her labor for her pains," Miss Wilton added, grimly. "I'll make it so hot for her that she'll throw up her contract, as that Farnsworth woman did." She turned to the maid. "Unfasten this waist," she said. "Now go, Jack," she continued, looking over her shoulder. "You're in the way. Go out in front, and be sure and count the house. Full of dead-heads, I suppose," she concluded, apparently to herself, as she looked down on the maid kneeling before her. "Always is on a first night."

III

In the green-room two women in street dress sat waiting. One of them, young and large and blonde, with a perfectly outlined face and beautiful gray eyes and long lashes, was sitting serenely, apparently unconscious of the heat. Her companion, a small

wizened woman in black, looked nervous and hot. She kept fanning herself with a little paper fan and glancing about as if expecting someone. A look of terror and gratification appeared in her face when Fischer opened the door.

"I'm glad to find you here," he remarked.

The young woman rose. "My mother," she said, indicating the little figure.

Fischer nodded. "How do you do?" His manner suggested that he disliked mothers. Then he turned to the girl again. "Have you brought your things? Oh, yes!" He glanced at the big trunk near the open door. "That makes me feel better. Now," he went on, assuming a harsher and more businesslike tone, and including the little figure in his glance, as if she had a share in the matter about to be considered, "I don't want to have any misunderstanding about our arrangement, Miss Bertram. If Miss Wilton is able to play through the season, you may have nothing whatever to do. I can't promise you a thing. But if anything happens to Miss Wilton, I'll give you her work; and I have some very strong work down for her this year. In any case, of course, your salary will go on. Now is that perfectly clear?"

"Perfectly," said Miss Bertram. The little woman glanced from the manager to her daughter and looked as if she were about to burst into tears.

"Now about to-night. I've reserved two aisle seats for you at the back of the house. You'll find them at the box-office. In case anything happens I'll send for you. Be sure not to leave till the piece is over. I may want you after the performance." Miss Bertram nodded, and the manager hesitated. "Let me see." He looked sharply at the girl. "Are you up in the lines?"

"I did the part for a week last season in Baltimore, and since I got your message this morning I've gone over the lines several times."

"Well, the prompter will help you

out, anyway," the manager went on, nervously, "in case you have to go on. You'll have to make a bluff at the business and follow the lead of the other people. Now I think that's all," he concluded, his manner sending the little woman precipitately to the door.

When Mabel Bertram reached the street, she said, without looking at her mother: "Isn't he awful?"

The little woman held her hands to her ears. "Those elevated trains are deafening." The noise and the electric lights had the effect of intensifying the heat. "Oh, yes," she replied, weakly. "I'm afraid it's going to be dreadfully hard for you. I almost wish you hadn't agreed——"

"Oh, bosh! All I want is my chance. If I can only get out on that stage once—just *once!*" The girl clicked her teeth. "If Nellie Wilton has me turned out of the company, all the better for me. I'll be sure of getting another engagement."

The little woman sighed. She did not understand these complications. Her daughter's career in the theatre had first astonished and then bewildered her. She was still bewildered.

At the entrance to the theatre they met Stevens, the business manager, known in the newspapers as "Fischer's shadow." He at once received Miss Bertram as if she were a valuable piece of property. The mother he ignored, but she was used to being ignored by managers. "I've got a place for you in there," he said, "on the aisle, where we can get at you if we want you. Here, boy!" He snapped his fingers at one of the ushers, and held out two red seat-checks. "Show Miss Bertram to her place."

The girl took her mother's arm as they ascended the carpeted steps leading to the orchestra. The theatre was half-filled. Electric fans were whirling. Only the men in evening clothes looked cool.

"Did you notice that little man leaning against the post as we came in?" said Miss Bertram. "That was Nellie Wilton's husband. He's always around. They say Fischer hates

him. See! there he is; the one with the eyeglasses. He has a funny blink, hasn't he? Seems to want to know who's here. They say she has an interest in the theatre, and he watches every cent that comes into the box-office." She took her program and scanned the cast. "Oh, dear!" she sighed. Then she began to examine the audience. "I suppose a lot of these people are celebrities. I know that white-haired man's a critic. I can tell by the way he folds his coat under the seat and sort of spreads himself out, as if he felt at home." The little woman appeared interested, but she made no comment. Miss Bertram was used to talking monologues with her mother. Sometimes her talk was disconnected, as if she had merely thought out parts of it, not considering it worth while to put them into words. "Poor thing!" she mused, glancing at her program again, "they say she's in an awful bad way."

"Who is?" asked the mother, not following the train of her ideas.

"Nellie Wilton. She's a fool to go on in this weather. I'd have made him postpone the opening till this heat stopped."

The leader of the orchestra appeared and took his place. During the overture the theatre filled rapidly. Miss Bertram remained calm. Even the increasing heat seemed to have no effect upon her. The little woman kept watching her covertly with the look mothers give to children they have never learned to understand.

"Oh, to get out on that stage!" Mabel Bertram kept thinking. "Just once! just once!"

IV

FISCHER had been criticised in the press for opening his season with a revival of "As You Like It," but as he had no new piece ready, he had been obliged to resort to the old repertory. A moment before the hour set for the beginning of the perform-

ance he stood at Nellie Wilton's door. "Are you ready?" he asked, tapping with one finger and putting his head through the draperies.

Miss Wilton gathered her flowing skirts in her left hand. "Yes," she said; "ring up!"

"How do you feel?"

"Oh, first-rate, now that I've got my war-paint on." She examined her face in the mirror. "Thérèse, you might put a bit of rouge on my cheek. Not that cheek, stupid! Here, give it to me! If I were to trust to you, I'd go out there looking like a ghost."

"Have you taken a sip of the Scotch?" Fischer asked, referring to a parcel he had brought from the hotel restaurant.

"No, I haven't, and I don't intend to unless I get dizzy. Is the house filling up? Awful fools, to come out in this weather. Now go and ring up, Colonel. I tell you I'm all right."

He hesitated. He didn't like her feverish manner. It reminded him of the night when she had fainted on the stage after the last act of "She Stoops to Conquer." Fortunately, the incident had not got into the papers. But if it had happened during the show! He had already had hard work keeping the papers from talking of Nellie Wilton's failing health.

He gave the signal for the curtain and stood in the wings. He had engaged several new actors, and he wanted to see what they could do. One of them exasperated him, a young fellow who was making his first appearance on the stage.

"I told you not to stand so near the footlights," he cried, as the boy came off. "Why didn't you obey my orders?"

The boy colored through his make-up. He tried to stammer an excuse, but Fischer cut him short.

"I don't care whether you're the greatest actor on the stage, if you don't follow my orders you'll be dismissed. You might as well understand that. Go to your room."

When he looked around Nellie Wil-

ton was standing at his elbow. "They're all out there," he said, his tone softening, "Jameson of the *Chronicle* and the whole newspaper gang."

She adjusted the lace on her sleeve. "H'm!" she said. She liked to pretend that she didn't care what the newspapers said of her.

When she received her cue the apathetic audience bestirred itself and gave her a welcome. The applause animated her. Fischer smiled. After all, he thought, there was no one like her, no one with such temperament, such a faculty for submerging herself in a character. Then, too, he took a personal pride in her. He had found her twenty years before, crude and unformed after years of barnstorming in the West. He had taught her to walk, to speak; he had taught her even how to dress. He had given her taste. It was like training a child. She was his creation, his great achievement. And through the uncertainties of his career as manager she had remained loyal to him. She had refused fine offers from other managers whose speculative success had been greater than his. It is true she had disappointed him by marrying. He had come to believe that he owned her. Happily, however, her marriage had not diminished her popularity with the public. On the other hand, people were saying that she was growing old and couldn't last much longer. At moments he wondered if, in the end, her loyalty might not prove to be a serious obstacle to him. Through years of service she had made his theatre her theatre, a kind of shrine where she received worshippers who would resent the introduction of another goddess. Then, too, as she grew older she had developed a jealousy of other actresses, particularly of young actresses. Of late she had even shown a jealousy of some of the men. His relations with her grew more difficult each year, till he had nearly reached the point of rebellion.

At this moment, however, Fischer's

irritation against Nellie Wilton was soothed by the sight of her success after her absence of four months from the stage. Oh, she was good for several years more, he assured himself. Later in the season he would put her into heavier work, into older parts that suited her age. He had always imagined that she would make the greatest *Lady Macbeth* of her generation. But he expected to have trouble in persuading her to change her line; she had become inordinately sensitive with regard to any matter that related to her age, however remotely.

As she returned to the wings, he observed that all the light seemed to leave her face. "You're doing splendidly," he said.

She held up her hand to her forehead. "It has nearly killed me," she gasped. "I thought I'd faint on the stage."

"What!" he exclaimed, in astonishment. "Why, you—you——"

"Get me a chair," she said.

One of the scene-shifters placed a chair behind her, and she sank into it. "Now go and get that Scotch. Tell Thérèse to bring it. She knows what I can take. You stay here, Colonel."

The scene-shifter had dashed to the dressing-room. Several of the actors began to gather round with alarm in their painted faces. "Go back. Miss Wilton is all right," said Fischer, impatiently.

"I couldn't see a thing when I went on." Nellie Wilton spoke as if she were out of breath. "There was just a black mass whirling round and round. It was worse than that night last year. It's that vertigo. I thought I'd got over it."

Her husband hurried in through the corridor leading from the front of the house. When he saw her he was too startled to speak coherently. "Wha—what is it?" he said.

"Keep still," she exclaimed, impatiently. She held out her hand to the maid, who had come with the Scotch. She took a sip and put the glass on the floor. "I'm afraid of that," she said. "I'm so weak, I'm afraid it will——"

She tried to rise, but she had to clutch her husband's arm. As she walked toward the dressing-room she straightened up. "Don't you worry, Colonel. I'll be ready to go on when my cue is given."

"Your cue comes in about five minutes," said Fischer, not realizing how brutal his words sounded.

They placed her on a couch in the dressing-room and Thérèse deftly loosened the dress at the neck. Then she began to fan vigorously. Nellie Wilton groaned. "It's the heat," she said. "My head is going round and round. Give me another sip of that Scotch. No. Just the seltzer is better. There. That's cooling." She sat upright and looked wildly around the room. Then she broke into hysterical laughter and tears.

"Oh, my God!" her husband cried. "She's got 'em."

V

WHEN *Rosalind* left the stage Mabel Bertram turned to her mother. "No chance for me to-night," she said. "I guess I'm in for it. She may be all right for the rest of the season. Then I sha'n't get one step ahead, and at the end of the season I'll be a year older." Her mother looked distressed. She had watched Miss Wilton with contradictory feelings of sympathy for the woman and with hope for her daughter. "I wish I hadn't signed that contract now. He's got me tied hand and foot—I didn't even take time to read it through. I was a fool. He can give me my two weeks' notice any time, but I'm helpless."

For the next few moments she followed the piece with tears in her eyes. Then, to the astonishment of the audience, the curtain was suddenly rung down.

"Heavens! Can anything have happened?"

Mabel Bertram looked around. Stevens stood at her elbow. "They want you," he whispered.

Her face grew luminous. "Come along, mother," she said, triumphantly.

"We can go through to the stage from here," said Stevens, crossing the lobby. "You're to dress in Miss Jordan's room, I believe, No. 8. Miss Jordan isn't on in this piece. Colonel Fischer will probably be waiting to show you."

They met Fischer as they stepped on the stage. The crisis had calmed him. "Your trunk is in the room," he said, quietly. "Don't waste any time."

As she dressed, Mabel Bertram scarcely spoke. Her face was resolute. Her mother's fingers shook as they buttoned the girl's gown. They both felt that the great moment had arrived.

The audience received the substitute very coldly. It was not until she reached the scene in the forest that she seemed to hold the interest. Her tall, slim figure looked well in the brown doublet and hose. She acted, too, with a delightfully youthful spontaneity. At the close of the act she was called with *Orlando* three times before the curtain. They might have appeared together a fourth time if Fischer had not remarked, coldly: "I guess we've had enough of that."

As she walked toward the dressing-room Roswell Foster, the *Orlando*, who had been playing leading parts for two seasons at Fischer's, turned to her with a smile.

"The Colonel doesn't seem as happy as he might be," he said.

"What's the matter?" Mabel Bertram asked, nervously.

"Oh, nothing. He always acts like that when any of us gets curtain calls; that is, anyone but Wilton."

"Has she gone home yet?" the girl asked.

"Yes. They bundled her off in a cab half an hour ago. I suppose they didn't want her to see what kind of an impression you were making. You know what she is, don't you?" he concluded, with a significant smile, as he left her at the dressing-room door.

She found her mother brushing the gown to be worn in the last act. "Awful place this," she cried, entering the room. "It seems like a kind

of prison. The actors are so afraid of Fischer they don't dare to say 'Boo!' You ought to see them going round on tip-toe and sneaking out of the way whenever they think he is coming. Whew! I don't believe I could stand it very long," she went on, unlacing her doublet. "However," she said, with a grim smile, "I've been out there, and I've got 'em. If my notices to-morrow are any good, I can snap my fingers in old Fischer's face."

"And break your contract?" the mother asked, with a frightened look.

"Break it? Yes, if I can get something better."

"But suppose he should sue you?"

"Oh, he wouldn't take the trouble. Besides, if he did, it would mean a lot of advertising for me."

"Don't do anything foolish, dear," the little woman pleaded.

At the close of the performance the audience stood and applauded enthusiastically. Fischer was standing in the wings with Mabel Bertram and young Foster. "You'd better go out now," said Fischer, holding back the curtain.

"Sha'n't I let Miss Bertram go out alone?" said Foster, generously. "This is her call."

Fischer glared at him. "Do as I say, sir."

When they returned to the wings Fischer was still scowling. Foster, too, showed resentment in his face. As the applause continued, they hesitated. Then Fischer walked up toward the green-room.

"Enough of that!" he said. "Let the people go home."

"Nice man, isn't he?" said Foster, with a little smile, when the manager was out of hearing. "But, after all, it's a great compliment to you."

"I should think he'd want me to please the house," Mabel Bertram replied, bewildered. "What did he engage me for? He could get plenty of bad actresses."

"Oh, he's afraid of Wilton. He's always starting to do things that he knows she won't like, and then he hasn't the nerve to carry them through."

"Do you mean that he's going to let me go?" she gasped.

"Why, you aren't regularly engaged, are you?"

"Yes, for the whole season."

Foster laughed. "Well, if that isn't just like him!" he went on. "He's always doing that. They say he did it in the case of Mary Farnsworth last season, when Wilton began to be sick. She threatened to sue him, and he paid her for six months."

Mabel Bertram looked at him angrily, as if he were Fischer. "I'd like to have him try that on me," she said. "I'd just like to!"

"What would you do?" he laughed.

"Just you wait and see!"

Foster hurried away, smiling, and burst into his dressing-room. His two room-mates were rubbing off their make-up. "Well, I guess the Colonel's up against it again," he cried, dropping into a wooden chair and pulling off one of his boots. "Ugh! How this thing sticks! It's about two sizes too small for me. If the Colonel weren't so beastly mean he wouldn't make us wear those old property——"

"Rosie, you shouldn't have such large feet," said one of the actors, a short, fat man with a round and jovial comedian's face.

"They're always getting in the way here, I notice," said the other, a big, raw-boned man of thirty, who played character parts.

"Yes, Rosie, you take up too much room," said the comedian.

"How is the Colonel up against it?" the young man asked.

"With Mabel Bertram, I mean. She's got a contract with the Colonel for a year, and she says if he breaks it she'll do him."

"Well, she's a winner all right," cried the comedian. "She can act all around Wilton."

"She's a fighter, too," said Foster. "You can see that in her eye. Just wait till to-morrow and see what'll happen. If Bertram gets good notices I'll bet dollars to doughnuts Wilton will come down as fresh as a

daisy and go through her work without a break."

"Yes," the old man conceded. "There's nothing like jealousy for putting life into her."

Though the last to leave the stage, Foster was the first of the three actors to hurry out of the dressing-room. As the young fellow opened the door the comedian remarked, carelessly, "I do like to see a boy so anxious to get home to his mother. Give her my love, Rosie!"

Foster sent back his deep laugh as he walked quickly toward the green-room. He glanced between the folding doors as if expecting to find someone there. Then he turned and scanned the group of relatives and friends of the actresses who stood in the corridor. His eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"Oh, here you are!" he said. He held out his hand to a pale-faced, timid-looking girl, who blushed as she replied to his greeting.

"Come!" he said, in a low voice, passing out quickly to the street as if to avoid the glances of the group. The girl followed, and they turned toward Broadway. "We mustn't tackle him to-night," he said; "he's all worked up! It would queer your chance."

"I thought perhaps it would be better," the girl agreed, gently.

"Yes, I wouldn't have you meet him to-night for a good deal. Some other night this week will do just as well. He said any night, you know, and I hadn't told him."

The girl sighed. When they reached Broadway they crossed and walked toward Fifth avenue. "We'll go to the Holland House," he said, "and we'll talk it over there. I shall be glad to get something to drink. I'm as thirsty as a fish, and I'm inclined to think I can eat something, too."

"Yes, you must be all tired out," she said, letting her hand rest on his arm. She sighed again. "She's wonderful, isn't she?" she said, softly.

"Miss Bertram? Yes, it was great,

playing with her, especially after Wilton."

"And is she going to be engaged?"

He rapidly told her all he knew of Mabel Bertram. The girl listened eagerly. When he had finished, she said: "She's very beautiful, isn't she?"

"Yes, but she's a perfect iceberg. Even when she warms up to her work you can see the cold glitter in her eye. It was funny the way she watched me. She seemed to calculate everything."

"It didn't look so from the front. It was all so—so spontaneous, I thought."

"Spontaneous?" Foster laughed aloud. "There isn't a spontaneous thing about her!"

At the table they talked about the evening's adventures.

"They think Wilton's done for, over at the theatre," said Foster, "but I believe they're dead wrong. She's got a lot of grit, that woman. Some of 'em told me that if anything happened her, the Colonel would try to make me the card this season. But that's all rot. They want a woman there. I shouldn't be surprised, in case the Colonel was to lose Wilton, if he'd try to boom Mabel Bertram. But," he added, with an expression suggestive of disgust, "you never can tell what he'll do. He's always doing some damfool thing."

She tried to compliment him on his acting; but he only laughed. "Oh, Minnie," he said, "that's just your prejudice. I can't play Shakespeare. In the first place, I don't know enough—I'm not deep enough for a part like *Orlando*. I dare say I could do a cowboy all right, or something like that; something rough-and-tumble. But the romantic Shakespearian, as Fanny Ware calls it, that's altogether beyond me. Sometimes I feel like an awful fake in that theatre. They ought to have some swell actor for leading man at Fischer's. However," Foster concluded, with a sigh, "as long as the Colonel pays my salary I'm only too glad to hold on."

"Oh, I hope I shall be able to get in," she said, pleadingly.

"Well, little girl, if you'll only be patient, I think we can manage it." He looked at her sympathetically for a moment. "Only, I don't see—"

She made a little gesture, as if she were about to lay her hand on his.

"Now, please, let's not go over that again."

"All right," he said, cheerfully.

"After we—well—" She blushed, and he waited, smiling. As she hesitated he said, "Go on. Say it."

"Well, after we get married, it will be very much easier for me. When you're on the road, I can travel with you, and it won't cost you anything. That will be much better than my sitting here at home in an apartment, just dying of loneliness."

He nodded dubiously. "Yes, it will be much better," he acknowledged. "But," he added, quickly, "it would be so much easier for you, dear, not to get into the life. There are lots of things in it that I hate to have you know about, and lots of people that I—"

"It can't be any worse than my newspaper life, going around at night all by myself to all kinds of places."

"That's true enough. Say, Minnie, why can't you give the whole business up, newspaper work and the theatre and everything else, and just marry me? Why can't you?"

She shook her head. "You know why I can't."

"I don't know of any good reason," he insisted.

"We agreed to wait for two years, you know," she said, quietly, "and only six months are over."

"Oh, but this is all foolishness. It won't hurt me to get married, and I'll be a good deal more of a man when I've settled down with a wife like you."

"You aren't well enough established yet," she went on. "You wouldn't be so popular if—"

"Oh, nonsense! You've got that notion from reading the newspapers. Now, there's Freddy Newman—it didn't hurt him to get mar-

ried. He made more money last season than he ever made before, and he featured his wife, too. I could mention lots of others."

She held up one hand. "Two years," she said. "And you promised to get me the engagement."

He smiled affectionately. "Oh, but you're going to boss me!" he cried, leaning back in his chair. "I'll be like Ned Wells. I'll get you an engagement, just as Ned did for Fanny Laidlaw when he married her, and then you'll make a hit, and I'll be known as Minnie Lane's husband. There's Fanny Laidlaw pulling off two hundred a week at the Gotham, and poor old Ned can't get a job. And they say she beats him, too," he added, wagging his head.

"You're making fun of me now," she said, pretending to feel hurt.

He leaned forward and looked into her face. "Oh, you!" he said; "say, you're too good. For heaven's sake, let's get married, and let old Fischer go to the devil."

She looked at him warningly. "You promised," she said, severely. "You always keep forgetting that."

"All right," he groaned. "But if you're sorry some day, don't blame me. I saw Fischer eyeing some of the extra girls to-day, and I could see that he was sizing 'em up. There are three or four that won't stay more than a week. Then I can get you a chance. That's why I wanted you to wait till after we get started. Fischer always wants people early in the season, and he wants 'em in a hurry. So you can get it without having him cross-question the life out of you."

VI

It was nearly midnight when Mabel Bertram left her dressing-room. All the other performers had left long before, but she found Fischer waiting for her near the stage-entrance. "I want to speak with you a moment," he said.

She looked at him with an expression that was meant to be purely

inquiring. In spite of herself, however, she betrayed the resentment that her talk with Foster had roused in her.

"It's too hot to do any work to-night." Miss Wilton's collapse had evidently served as a warning to him. "But I shall want you to be at the rehearsal to-morrow at eleven o'clock. No—" Fischer hesitated, with his hand on the back of his head. "Perhaps you'd better be here at half-past ten. Let me see. Ten would be even better. Can you get here so early?"

She bowed slightly. There was resentment even in the bow. Fischer did not observe it, however.

"I shall want to run over some of the scenes with you. I don't like your reading of the verse—it isn't colloquial enough. And you put altogether too much animation into the scenes with *Orlando* in the forest. You'll have to tone those down. But we can talk about that to-morrow," he added, turning away. "Of course—" here he turned again—"it's possible I sha'n't need you to-morrow night. Miss Wilton may be able to go on."

Mabel Bertram had blushed deeply. She disliked criticism even from so great a man as Israel Fischer. She believed that her reading of *Rosalind* was absolutely correct. She had studied the part with Professor Burr in Baltimore, and he had complimented her highly on her reading. As for her animation in those scenes with *Orlando*, it was to that her success with the audience was chiefly due.

Fischer walked slowly up the corridor to his office. He did not say good-night. He was closing the door just as the two women passed it.

"Lovely manners!" cried Mabel Bertram, as the negro opened the street door for her. Her mother did not reply, and they walked along the narrow alley leading to Sixth avenue. "Let's not ride," said the girl. "I feel like getting the air. Wasn't it stifling in there? The heat from the footlights was deadly."

"It was hot in the dressing-room, too," the little woman meekly remarked.

"It must have been awful," cried Miss Bertram, as if pricked by her conscience. "Why did you stay in there all the time?"

"I was afraid he might not like it if I came out," she replied, looking into her daughter's face.

Miss Bertram laughed. "How he does scare everybody," she said. "But he doesn't scare me," she added, defiantly.

They walked swiftly down Broadway to the Metropolis Hotel, where they had engaged a room that morning on their arrival from Baltimore. When they went to the office to get their key, Mabel Bertram said to the clerk: "Please get the man at the news-stand to send up all the papers to-morrow morning as soon as they come in. Don't forget, will you?"

The clerk understood. He bowed and smiled. "Certainly, Miss Bertram," he said. "I hear you had a great success to-night," he went on, affably. "One of our guests was there and told me about it. I congratulate you."

"Thank you," she replied, brightening. "But oh, it was so hot!" she said, with the plaintive voice and manner that she liked to assume with men. "I'm quite exhausted. But it *was* nice," she concluded, archly, giving him a smile over her left shoulder.

Mrs. Bertram always felt uncomfortable when her daughter assumed this arch manner in her presence. It made her feel as if the girl had somehow escaped from her, had become someone else. It took her several moments to recover from such an exhibition. In the solitude of her life, deepened by the constant companionship of her daughter, who had the faculty of seeming, when she chose, to be a thousand miles away, Mrs. Bertram often speculated about the effect on women of the theatrical life. She had felt no prejudices against the life, and she had made no objection when her daughter chose it; after three years of association with actors, however, she had formulated certain views about the stage as a career which she never communicated

to her daughter, which she communicated, in fact, to no one.

This night Mrs. Bertram did not sleep, for the reason that she thought that her daughter wouldn't sleep. But when, at seven o'clock in the morning, a bellboy with the newspapers knocked on the door, the girl, evidently exhausted, was in deep slumber. The sound roused her, however, and she seized the papers from her mother's hand. She read the notices, one after another, without speaking. As she dropped the last one on the bed she glanced at the anxious face of her mother, who had not looked at one of the notices. The little woman seemed to be concerned chiefly about their effect on her daughter.

"Well, it's not so bad. That old *Chronicle* man is kind of patronizing, but he says I've got it in me and Fischer is lucky to have me. That'll please Fischer, won't it? But the *Item*—" she picked up a paper with large black headlines—"the *Item* gives me a splendid notice, and you know that Guy Fawkes usually ridicules actors. They say what he writes helps a lot, even if he is vulgar and cheap. Here, let me read it to you: '*She came; she was seen; she conquered. Mabel Bertram, I take off my hat to you. You're a winner.*' Fresh, isn't he? '*Mabel, I like you. I liked you two years ago when you played the persecuted ingénue at the People's Theatre on the Bowery.*' I wish he had left that out. Well, never mind. '*At that time I advised Israel Fischer to get you. Well, it took him two years to make up his mind. Oh, these managers! What blunderers they are! Here for two seasons the cleverest woman on our stage has been eating her heart out in provincial stock companies.*' That's right. That's just what I was doing. '*And now with one leap she has landed on the top of the heap. She has completely outshone Wilton on Wilton's own stage. It was a bad night for Wilton. The contrast those two women made! 'Pon my word, I felt sorry for Wilton. But youth must have its day, and, to be frank, dear friends, we've allowed*

Wilton to lag—I won't say superfluous, that would be cruel—well, just to lag on Fischer's stage for several years now. With her New York reputation, she ought to make a nice little fortune out of town and then settle down right here in New York and have a lovely time going to first nights with all the other retired actresses who look so pretty with their fresh, auburn hair. Wonderful, isn't it, how these actresses keep their hair?"

"Isn't he awful? No wonder the actors hate him. This will kill Wilton. If I were in Fischer's boots I wouldn't let him into the theatre. There was a manager that actually did try to keep him out. Well, just listen to the rest.

"Now, one of the nicest things about Bertram is that she is young and fresh and unspoiled. She has a natural method; she doesn't mouth; she doesn't try to paint up her lines with affectation; and she has plenty of go. Then, too, she is a mighty pretty girl, a bit too tall, perhaps, for the average leading man, but, after all, that's a reflection on the man. Last night she made a hit that must have reverberated with several dull, sickening thuds through poor Wilton's brain. Now comes the question: Will Israel Fischer have the sand to keep her?" Mabel Bertram drew a long breath. "Isn't that fine?" She laughed, letting the paper fall from the bed to the floor. "Thousands and thousands of people will read it, a hundred times as many as read the old *Chronicle*. The *Gazette* has a good notice, too. See how it begins: 'A new actress made her first appearance before a Broadway audience last night under peculiar circumstances. After the first scene in the revival of "As You Like It" at Fischer's theatre, Miss Wilton was taken suddenly ill. Miss Mabel Bertram, who happened to be in the audience—' they always get things wrong, don't they?—'jumped into the breach and scored an unmistakable success. She is a tall, slim girl, with a face that would be classic if her nose had just a little less piquancy.' There's that nose of mine again. I wish

they'd let it alone. It doesn't turn up," she petulantly insisted. "'She has, besides, a beautiful voice, of surprising carrying power, and a diction rare in our theatre. Best of all, she possesses insight, taste, and interpretive ability. Remember her! She is going to be a great figure on our stage some day.' The others are nearly all as good. You can look at 'em if you want to. But those three are going to help most. There, now, I think I'll go to sleep again. Wake me up at half-past eight."

The girl turned on her pillow and sank into unconsciousness. Her mother looked at her solicitously. Then, gathering her wrapper tightly about her, the little woman picked up the papers from the floor and the bed, adjusted her spectacles, and proceeded to read.

VII

AT about the time when Mabel Bertram was reading the press notices of the performance of the night before, Nellie Wilton was engaged in the same occupation in her house in East Fifty-seventh street. She had emerged from a sleepless night with one of those accessions of vigor and apparent health that used to astonish her friends. Her face had lost its haggard lines, her eyes were bright, she seemed to be full of energy. She looked young.

"I'm going to be all right," she said to her maid, who brought the papers. "I'll have my tea and toast here as soon as you can bring it. I'm hungry. I haven't eaten for ages. I couldn't eat any dinner last night."

She glanced first at the *Chronicle*, from which she was used to receiving lavish praise. She read the regretful reference to her own illness, then hungrily ran her eyes over the praises of her substitute. She ground her teeth. The years of devotion of the *Chronicle's* critic to her could not save him now from her resentment and contempt. Some of the other notices she merely glanced at. She kept the *Item*

till the last. The *Item's* critic had already caused her many bad moments. As she read his article now she scarcely moved. Then she sank back in her seat and stared. Her face grew gray and old. Suddenly she sat up and rang the bell. When the maid appeared she cried, angrily:

"Isn't that breakfast of mine ready yet?"

"There—there hasn't been time yet for the tea, Mrs. Hathaway," the maid faltered.

"Tell the cook to hurry it up. And get my blue serge out. I'm going to dress right after breakfast. Telephone for the coupé. I'll be ready in half an hour. And here—wait. Can't you stand still till you get my message? If Mr. Hathaway gets up after I leave, tell him that I've driven down to the theatre and I'll be back for luncheon."

She gulped down the tea that was speedily brought to her bedside. As the coupé drove to her door, she was descending the stairs.

Fischer showed no surprise on seeing her; in fact, he never showed surprise. According to the testimony of those who knew him best, his only emotional expression was anger. "Well?" he said.

She let her left hand rest on his desk. "Have you read the papers?" she asked.

He bowed.

"I suppose you know what I've come for."

"I can surmise," he replied, blandly.

"I want you to discharge that woman."

"Why?" He always said "Why?" to this statement, which he was quite used to hearing her make.

"Both of us can't stay in the company. Of course," Miss Wilton went on, folding her arms, "of course, if you prefer to keep *her*—"

"But, my dear, be reasonable, can't you? I've made a contract—"

"Break it. It won't be the first you've broken. But out she must go. In the first place, you engaged her without consulting me. You did that with that Farnsworth woman."

"But what difference does it make whether I consult you or not? They all have to go just the same," he sighed. "I'm getting tired of it."

Her eyes flashed. "So am I. I've been tired of it for a long time. I'm tired of you, Israel Fischer. You're an ingrate."

"Oh!" he protested, gently.

"Yes, an ingrate! After I made you!"

"Most people think it was the other way," he interrupted, keeping his self-control.

"Well, most people don't know. Where would this theatre be, where would you be, without me? You know perfectly well that I've been the attraction here ever since you opened the house."

"You forget that I discovered you and gave you your start," he retorted.

"Gave me my start! Why, I'd been playing for five years before I ever saw you—and in good theatres, too."

"And you also forget," he continued, as if she had not spoken, "that I taught you everything you know."

"Oho," she laughed, harshly. "You! Why, what were you when I first met you? Nothing. You had hardly a cent to your name. You were a mere hanger-on, an advance man for a second-rate company, and just out of the box-office at that, too, a ticket-seller. You talk to me—*you!*"

She looked at him with eyes that seemed trying to burn him up.

For a moment he waited. Then he said: "I don't think that this kind of talk does either of us any good."

"Well, you began it."

He smiled. "Perhaps I did," he conceded. "Anyway, I wish you'd sit down."

She sank into the heavy carved chair he had glanced at. She was panting. She looked over the damask curtains at the windows and at the armor, the rare books and the other treasures that littered the room. She seemed to be appraising their value.

"We've both made each other," he

said, "and recriminations between us are foolish."

She became tearful. "Then why don't you show a little gratitude?"

"I think I've shown it." He watched her as she cried into her handkerchief. Then he said: "I had to engage that girl as a matter of self-protection, as a mere precaution. I knew you weren't——"

"I'm perfectly well. You see how well I am," she cried, holding out her hand, with her handkerchief in a little ball. "I've never been better in my life. It was just the heat, last night. Now that it's cooler, there's nothing the matter with me."

"You do recover wonderfully," he acknowledged, with a sigh that might have sounded suspicious to her if she had not been too absorbed to notice it.

"And there is no reason whatever why you should keep that woman."

He bit his lip. "I don't intend to put her into any new parts."

She rose from her seat. "I want her out of the company. Do you hear? Out of it. I won't have her around."

Their eyes met for a moment. They faced each other. At last he softened. "Very well, then," he said. From his concession he determined to wring an advantage. "But there's one thing we must understand. Later in the season you must go into heavier work."

To his astonishment she sat down without making a sign of resentment, and replied, gently: "I was going to speak to you about that. I want to go into heavier work myself. Oh, you needn't beat about the bush with me, Israel Fischer. I know perfectly well what you mean. You're thinking of what that miserable creature said about me in the *Item* this morning. Well, I am growing old," she cried, defiantly. "I'm old before my time. I've grown old working for you, rehearsing all night long, as I've often done for you, and going on that stage when I ought to have been in my bed. Now I'm perfectly willing to take older parts. The sooner the

better. I'm not going to have them say——" Tears choked her voice.

"We might begin with *Lady Macbeth*."

"Now, you know as well as I do that I've always hated that part. *Lady Macbeth*! There's nothing in it except the sleep-walking scene, and anyone can play that. Besides, I don't propose to make myself look any older or more haggard than I am. No, thank you, no *Lady Macbeth* for me yet awhile." She looked away from him. "It's a play for men, anyway. *Macbeth* and *Macduff* have the best parts."

"What shall we do, then?" he asked, stonily.

Her reply came so quickly that he divined she had been giving thought to this matter for a long time. "We can make a big production of 'The Winter's Tale!' We can make it spectacular. That will draw the mob," she added, contemptuously. "People don't come to the theatre to see acting any more; they come to see scenery. I'll do *Hermione* and *Perdita*."

He wanted to smile, but he kept serious. He had never lost his admiration for her cleverness. By playing so young a character as *Perdita*, no one could say that in appearing the same evening as *Hermione* she was going into older parts. For several seasons he had kept vaguely in mind a plan of producing "The Winter's Tale," and he at once decided that the coming season would be an excellent time for the production. But he took a few moments in order to weigh the proposition. He liked to flatter himself by not letting Nellie Wilton appear to rule him.

"I'll think about that," he said at last. "It isn't a bad idea."

"We could put it on in January," Nellie Wilton continued, as if the matter were settled. She understood Israel Fischer better than he understood himself. "Of course, you'd have to begin work on the scenery right off. We might see how the piece would cast now," she concluded, glancing at the paper and pens on his desk.

He took up a pad of paper and they selected the actors for the cast. Fischer seemed to know from memory nearly all of the characters. It was not until they reached the minor parts that he had to go to the revolving book-case beside his chair and consult a volume of Shakespeare. Occasionally they would disagree with regard to the actors best suited for certain rôles; in the case of the men, she usually yielded to his judgment; in regard to the women, however, he yielded. They discussed the production for more than an hour longer, and they also touched upon some minor plans and details of management, with regard to which Nellie Wilton took a tone of authority. Finally, she looked at her watch and rose quickly from her seat.

"It's nearly ten o'clock—I must go to the tailor's. I'll be back in an hour for rehearsal."

For a moment they looked at each other. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement; her gray hair softened her face; her close-fitting blue serge suit gave her an air of youth. She had reached the point in her career when she looked better off the stage than on. Her youthful wigs and her make-up intensified by contrast the lines in her face. He thought of her as she had been in her dazzling youth, her eyes aglow, her cheeks aflame, her complexion like porcelain shot with fire. She turned quickly away. She hated to have him look at her like that. She knew that he was watching the changes in her face, just as she had been watching them for years in her mirror.

VIII

At a quarter to ten o'clock Mabel Bertram was dressed for the street. Her mother started to put on a wrap and a hat. "After all," said the girl, "I don't know as you'd better go. He hates to have people tagging after the company. They say he's particularly down on mothers. Laura Binney once told me that he used to be awfully hateful to her mother."

Mrs. Bertram accepted the decision without comment. She hung her hat and wrap in the closet again.

"Then there's no knowing what may happen over there. After what the papers have said, I shouldn't be in the least surprised to get my two weeks' notice. Anyway, I'm all right," she added, startling her mother with triumphant laughter. "If I'm not back by one o'clock, you go down and get your luncheon. He may keep me rehearsing there all day."

The girlswept out of the room with a fine air of confidence. Those newspaper notices had exasperated her. In the hotel office she was disappointed not to see the clerk who had been so friendly the night before. She wanted to receive more of his adulation. The day clerk apparently did not recognize her.

When she reached the theatre the man at the door told her that she would find the Colonel in the green-room. He was talking with the *Orlando* of the night before. He did not notice her, and she took a seat and waited. For ten minutes he spoke in tones so low that she could not catch a word. As young Foster's only replies consisted of nods of the head, she concluded that Fischer was offering instructions. Presently the doorkeeper shuffled in and gave the manager a card. Fischer glanced at the name and dashed out of the room.

Foster came forward and offered his hand. She observed that he was scrupulously dressed in a sack-coat. In his hand he carried a straw hat. "Well, *your* fortune's made," he said. "I've seen the papers."

She smiled and thanked him. "But isn't he funny?" She glanced at the door. "Not a word, and he told me to be here at ten o'clock."

"Oh, that's just like him. You mustn't expect any thanks from *him*." He pulled out his watch. "He told me to be here at ten, too, for a rehearsal. I must get out on the stage. I guess he'll be back in a minute," he added, consolingly, noticing her embarrassment.

For the next twenty minutes Mabel Bertram waited. Several members of the company looked in, opening letters that they had just taken from the rack in the corridor. Some of them merely glanced at her; a few whom she had talked with the night before bowed pleasantly. One of them came up and congratulated her. She fancied that they all were "queer" with her. She could not understand what it meant. They treated her, she said to herself, as if she didn't belong there, as if she were "out of it." She grew impatient, then angry. She looked at her watch and decided that she would still wait ten minutes, but not a second longer.

When five minutes had passed she heard a scuffling of feet through the half-open door. "Rehearsal begun yet?" a woman's voice panted. "Oh, dear! I'm late, then." Steps pattered rapidly down the corridor.

Mabel Bertram sat upright. So they were having a rehearsal, and without her! What did Fischer mean, anyway, by such treatment? She rose quickly and started for the door. Then she checked herself. No! She must not put herself in the wrong like that. She sat down again. When the ten minutes had passed she decided to stay on. Yes, she'd stay there till the night's performance began, if necessary. Curiosity, however, made her tiptoe toward the door and look out into the corridor. Fischer had just left the stage and was about to turn into his office.

"Oh!" he said.

He walked slowly into the room. "I had almost forgotten you." He began to pick off a speck of dust from the felt hat in his hand. "We—we sha'n't need you to-night," he went on, keeping his eyes on his hat. "Miss Wilton is well again. In fact, I don't think we shall be able to use you at all. So I'll give you your two weeks' notice now. You can get your salary from Stevens this morning, if you like. He'll pay you for the full two weeks." He turned carelessly toward the door. He seemed hardly to know that she was present.

"Wait a minute," she said, her lips turning white. Though she had expected something like this treatment, it shocked her.

He stopped and looked round at her, with his back turned toward her.

"How dare you treat me like this?" she cried. "How dare you?"

He turned into the hall as if he had not heard her. She stood glaring at the door through which he had passed. Then, as no one was at hand to see her, she suddenly calmed herself. When she walked out of the theatre she merely showed a little more than her usual energy.

She walked quickly back to the hotel. As she shaped her plans she smiled with bitterness and triumph. At the hotel she found the night clerk lounging near the news-stand.

"Oh, Mr. Simmons, I'm so glad to see you," she cried, holding out her hand.

His surprise at her cordiality and at her use of his name, which he could not know she had overheard by chance, made him respond with exaggerated warmth.

"I'm in awful trouble," she pouted, with a resumption of the manner she had adopted with him the night before.

"What's the matter?" he asked, solicitously, greatly flattered.

Then she told him of her morning's experience. "Of course, I shouldn't care at all," she ended, with tears in her eyes, "if it weren't for my professional reputation." She often referred to her "professional reputation." She liked the expression.

She saw that he was impressed. "Is there anything I can do, Miss Bertram?" he asked, feeling important.

"Of course, Fischer will have his side of the story, and——"

A bellboy had just come toward them with a letter in his hand. "The clerk told me to give you this, miss," he said. "It came by messenger a minute ago."

Mabel Bertram's eyes brightened. "From the *Item*! I wonder—" She tore open the envelope. "Oh, it's

from the dramatic editor. He wants me to send my photograph. They're going to run it to-morrow." She turned to the night clerk again. "Oh, yes, there is something you can do if you'll be so good, Mr. Simmons. You can call up the newspaper offices for me, if it isn't too much trouble. I want to let the city editors know that I'll be at home at three o'clock. I'm going to send them word about my row with Fischer."

"Why, of course," he said, beaming. "I know Billy Nichols of the *Item* very well, and I know Ned Fielding of the *Gazette*. Let me manage it for you."

"Oh, if you will! If it isn't asking too much!" She held up one hand and started for the elevator. "Three, mind," she added, as she bowed and smiled, and was whisked out of sight.

When she reached the room her mother was anxiously waiting for her. "It's all over," she burst out. "He's fired me. Get out my India silk, the one with the big scrolls, you know. A lot of reporters are coming at three o'clock. Quick! I want to see how I look in it. Perhaps I'd better wear the black cashmere; anyway, we'll see."

An hour later a messenger brought up a large bouquet of roses. Mabel Bertram took them out of the box with an exclamation of delight. She looked at the card that dropped from among them. She read with astonishment the name of Mr. Simmons. "How sweet of him," she said, coldly, tearing up the card.

IX

NELLIE WILTON reached home at noon. Her husband had just finished breakfast and was glancing over the papers. Most of his time was passed in reading newspapers and in dressing. In the morning he usually devoted nearly two hours to taking his bath, shaving and to arraying himself. When his wife entered the room he removed his cigarette from his

mouth and looked at her inquiringly, holding up the paper with one hand.

"Well?" he said.

She unfolded a napkin and rang the bell. "Bring me some luncheon, if there is anything to eat," she said to the maid. Then she turned to her husband. "I'm hungry. I've been standing for two whole hours at the tailor's and doing a lot of errands."

"You're a very astonishing woman, my dear," he remarked, taking a puff of his cigarette.

"I've had a talk with the Colonel," she went on. "By the way, that woman's out, Miss Bertram."

"Ah!" he said.

"We're to do 'The Winter's Tale' on the first of the year."

He lifted his eyebrows. "Foolish," he said.

"Why foolish?" she asked, sharply.

"Shakespeare again. There's no money in it. I've been telling you that ever since we got married."

"Yes, and a lot you know about it." She glanced at the pile of letters the maid had left at her plate. Her lip curled. "Sympathy, I suppose. There! Take them up to my room, Mary, and give them to Thérèse. I don't feel up to reading them now." She began to speak more vigorously. "We've made money before on Shakespeare, and I don't see why we can't make it again."

"You've lost it before, too. If you'll look back you'll see that you've lost more than you've gained. Why, you made more money last season on that old 'Magic Lantern' business!"

"Oh, keep still! The thing's settled. There's no use talking about it."

For a few moments Hathaway fixed his eyes on the paper. His wife ate rapidly, as if she were about to keep an engagement.

"I see Friedheim and Schwartz have got Langdon's new play," Hathaway remarked. "They're going to feature Mary Farnsworth in it."

Nellie Wilton's face expressed no interest.

"You ought to have had that," he went on. "If the Colonel only had a

little more enterprise he wouldn't let a piece like that go by. That's why I think he can't possibly last much longer. He isn't keeping abreast of the times."

"Oh, bosh!"

"Well, that's a fact. When you're playing Shakespeare to empty benches Friedheim and Schwartz will be coining money with that piece. The public don't want Shakespeare," Hathaway went on, irritably. "They want something modern, up-to-date, something they can understand."

"You're a perfect Philistine, Charlie," said Nellie Wilton, gulping down a glass of iced tea.

"Philistine! Perhaps I am, but I don't want to see you queered just at the time when you ought to be salting down a fortune. Last night I saw Sol Friedheim in the lobby of the theatre. He told me you were making the mistake of your life in tying yourself to a dead dog like Fischer. He said he was ready to take you at any time and send you out in a new piece. He said he'd guarantee a thousand a week and a percentage of the gross."

"M'm!" Nellie Wilton smiled contemptuously. "Do you know why he wants to get me?"

"Because he knows there's money in you. That's the usual reason, isn't it?"

"He knows there's money in me, and he knows that so long as I do Shakespeare I'm standing in that Farnsworth woman's way."

Hathaway looked puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"D'you mean to say that you don't know Mary Farnsworth has him right under her thumb? Why, she can make him do anything for her. Last season, when she left the Colonel, she predicted that before another year she'd be a leading woman and featured. She had her eye on Friedheim then. She told Mrs. Hickey, that society reporter creature, that she'd made up her mind to do Shakespeare and drive me into melodrama. I'd be willing to bet a hundred dollars she's the one who persuaded Friedheim that he ought to get me."

Hathaway looked at his wife in admiration. "Well, you *are* deep," he said.

"And you're an idiot," she retorted. "If I did as you wanted me to do I'd have been broke long ago. Now look here," she went on, tapping the table with the handle of her knife, "there's one thing about the Colonel—he's loyal."

"Yes, he showed that last night," Hathaway retorted, in a low voice.

"Never mind about that. That was just a little kick-up. He got scared. But I can take care of myself. Now, I've made up my mind to stand by him. He wants to do Shakespeare. So do I. I know as well as you do that I could make five times as much money by playing in those dirty French plays that Friedheim and Schwartz are putting on. But I'll see myself dead first. You go and tell that to Friedheim if he says anything to you about me again." She pushed her chair back from the table. "Now I'm going to look over my mail, and then I'm going to bed. Will you be here for dinner? We'll have it at half-past five. If I can only get a good sleep I shall be all right for to-night. Oh, you might telephone to Pizzano that I can't sit for the photographs tomorrow. They'll have to get along with old ones down at the theatre for a week or two till I'm more sure of myself."

On the way up stairs she thought for a moment of Mabel Bertram. Her new strength, together with the stimulus given her by her luncheon, made her feel almost sorry for the girl. She wondered what Miss Bertram would do. Would she get another engagement on the strength of her success of the night before, or would she go back to stock work? "Poor thing!" Nellie Wilton sighed, feeling virtuous.

Meanwhile, Mabel Bertram, considering herself to be a personage now, had decided to take luncheon in her own room. She had sent her mother down to the dining-room,

however. When the little woman returned she said that the gentleman they had seen the night before in the hotel office had been very kind to her; he had instructed the head waiter to give her a seat at one of the windows facing Broadway. She wondered why the girl received this information so indifferently.

"We must see about changing our rooms," said Miss Bertram. "If we're going to have so many callers we must have a place to receive them in."

A few minutes later Mr. Simmons tapped at the door. Miss Bertram looked surprised, resentful and pleased, all in a moment. "I've come to see if you wouldn't like to see the reporters in one of the small parlors," he said, with a smile. "I thought it would be pleasanter for you there," he concluded, involuntarily glancing at the bed.

"Why, yes, that would be very nice. I had intended to see them in the big ladies' parlor."

"Oh, you can have one of the rooms all to yourself," Mr. Simmons explained, blandly.

Mabel Bertram looked at him for a moment without speaking. His eyes blinked.

"It was so good of you to send the flowers," she said, in a low, deliberate voice. "Have you met my mother?" she added, with a slow glance toward the little figure.

"Oh, yes, we had a nice little chat a few minutes ago."

Mabel Bertram fingered a loose strand of her blond hair; she looked at Mr. Simmons with a smile on her lips but with the air of not seeing him. "It was awfully kind of you to arrange it," she said, in a manner that made him stand up at once, though he had evidently intended to make a little visit. She rose, too. She grew suddenly cordial. "I'm so distressed about this that I don't know what to do," she said, rapidly. She held out her hand with frank gratitude in her face. "You've been so kind," she repeated.

Though he had shown a slight depression a moment before, Mr. Simmons's fat face beamed again.

"It's nothing at all, I assure you," he said. "Nothing at all."

When he left the room Mrs. Bertram looked covertly at her daughter, but she said nothing. The girl rang for hot water and bathed her face; then she covered it lightly with powder, which she carefully removed with a piece of soft cloth. The flesh around her eyes had the plumpness and the delicacy of youth. Her cheeks were faintly flushed. She took the hand-mirror and parted her lips to look at her teeth. Then she touched her hair at the temples with the tips of her fingers.

"I'm glad I decided to wear the black," she said. "You'd better come down with me, mother, and see the reporters. It'll look better."

At a few minutes before three o'clock the first reporter to arrive sent up his card. "The *Item*!" she said. Then her lip curled. "But not the dramatic editor. I suppose he didn't think it was worth his while to call." She dropped the card on the table. "Well, I'll let him wait a few minutes."

She held up a paper-covered novel and pretended to read. Her mother looked distressed.

Two cards came up at the same moment. "The *Chronicle* and the *Evening Gazette*. Ah!" Miss Bertram sank back complacently. "It'll do them good to wait, too," she said.

According to the arrangement made by Simmons, the three reporters had been conducted to one of the small parlors. There they waited with some impatience.

"No smoking here, I suppose," said one of them. They seemed to be acquainted. "The nerve of the woman, to keep us cooling our heels here." He was a short, stout man, with curly blond hair and a slight mustache, and with blue eyes marked by premature wrinkles. He spoke in a high, effeminate voice and with an effeminate wagging of the head. For several years he had conducted the

dramatic department of the *Evening Gazette*, and he was known among theatrical people as Jimmie Lawson.

"What's it all about, Jimmie?" said Wall, of the *Item*, a slim youth with a smooth face and glasses, dressed in a tight-fitting blue serge suit. "I didn't get any instructions."

"She's trying to work us for an 'ad,' isn't she?" asked the third man, slowly. He was Harrison, of the *Chronicle*, large and aggressive-looking, with a red, pointed beard.

"Of course," said Jimmie Lawson, scornfully. "It's an old trick of hers. When she was down in Baltimore she used to work the papers all the time. That's what she came up here to go with Fischer for. She knew she'd have a row with him, and get a bully good advertisement out of it. Still," he went on with a smile, "I can't help admiring her sand, and then she really can act. You ought to have seen her last night. She was great."

"They say Wilton's breaking up, though," Harrison remarked, stretching out his long legs.

"Don't you believe it." Jimmie Lawson wagged his head several times to indicate that he had superior sources of information. "It was only the heat that knocked her out last night. That woman's got the go of a locomotive. Why, she's the one that runs that theatre. Fischer gets all the credit and she does all the work. By Jove, I don't blame her for getting on her ear whenever he engages other women that are younger and prettier."

For the next few minutes they discussed Nellie Wilton. Young Lawson seemed to be familiar with the minutest details of her history. He led in the talk with the air of one used to being treated as an authority in theatrical affairs. Indeed, the theatre was the only subject in which he was really interested. The theatrical life had absorbed him as completely as it absorbs actors, who, as he had himself often observed, take an interest in nothing else. With regard to the trouble between Mabel Bertram and Fischer he displayed an astonish-

ing amount of information, some of it inaccurate, however. He declared that Miss Bertram had been discharged from the company just as she was going to her dressing-room after the final curtain call; but for the interference of Fischer there might have been a personal quarrel between Nellie Wilton and her rival. "I've got something in to-night about it," Jimmie Lawson concluded, pulling out a newspaper from his pocket. "See. Just below my notice of the show."

As the other two reporters glanced over the article Mabel Bertram entered the room. Lawson rushed forward eagerly and held out his hand. No matter how severely he might "roast" actors, he liked to maintain pleasant personal relations with them. He was the only one of the three who knew the actress; so, after being presented to the mother, he introduced the others.

"Well, I see you've joined the club," he said, with his wide smile. He had a large mouth, with big, regular teeth.

"What club?" Miss Bertram asked, with the air of large-eyed, wondering diffidence that she liked to assume with reporters.

"Why, those who've had rows with Fischer. Fanny Dickinson has formed a club of 'em. You can't belong to it unless you can show one of Fischer's broken contracts."

"Ah!" She smiled at the joke and sat down beside her mother. Then, quietly and simply, in the manner that she had adopted since seeing Duse play *Camille*, she told the story of her wrongs. At the close she said, with tears in her voice:

"It isn't that I care for the engagement, or the salary, or anything like that. I knew I shouldn't be happy at Fischer's. But I'm ambitious, and I'm afraid this is going to hurt my professional reputation."

Here her mother began to cry. This was much better, Miss Bertram quickly decided, than if she were to cry herself; besides, she didn't want to show red and swollen eyelids to

these reporters. What a shame that, out of all the New York papers, only three should have sent men up!

"I don't believe this is going to hurt you at all," replied Jimmie Lawson, in his most confidential, familiar and effeminate manner. "The idea! It's going to do you a lot of good. You wait till to-morrow, and see if half a dozen managers won't be after you." As he spoke he had full appreciation of the humor of the situation at the moment. In his hand he held the paper in which he had ridiculed the whole adventure, intimating that it was merely a deep-laid plan of Mabel Bertram's to exploit herself in the New York papers. Soon after he left she would probably see the article, if she had not seen it already.

"I gave up a chance to sign again for stock work in Baltimore," Mabel Bertram went on. She quickly decided not to mention that she knew the manager of the company would be glad to engage her again at any time. "And then Frank Williams wanted me for 'The Circus Rider,' but I couldn't go out with that." She shuddered. "That was too cheap. Musical comedy, you know, though I shouldn't have had to sing."

"No, you don't want to get out of your line," said Lawson, with the patronizing air that he used even with actresses many years older than himself. "Well, I guess you'll be all right," he added, offering his hand and smiling at Mrs. Bertram, who, under his cheering influence, had stopped crying.

Mabel Bertram turned to the *Item* man.

"I sent the picture down that your editor wanted," she said; "that is, I sent a half-dozen, so that he could take his choice. They're all horrid," she added, insincerely, thinking of all the sittings she had had before being able to secure satisfactory results.

"Oh, that reminds me," said Harrison, who had followed the talk with a bored air. "Can you let us have one? We'd like to run it to-morrow."

"Certainly," the girl replied, smiling. "Mamma," she added, gently,

with an almost imperceptible change of expression in her eyes, "won't you go up and get them? You'll find them on the table in the sitting-room," she explained, as an afterthought.

A few minutes later Mrs. Bertram returned with a package of photographs. "You can take your choice," said the actress, passing them to the reporter. Wall selected one only, which he put in his pocket. As the reporters filed out, young Lawson lingered, as if expecting a special greeting.

"Do come and see me, won't you?" said Mabel Bertram, extending her hand again, and holding down her head so that her eyes might assume their finest expression of appeal.

X

BEFORE night four more reporters called at the hotel. One of them apologized for not having been there at the appointed time; the others either did not know of the appointment or they ignored it. A reference to Jimmie Lawson's article in the *Evening Gazette* made Mabel Bertram suspect it was that which had sent some of them to her. All the signs were pointing toward the sensation she secretly hoped for. When she read the article in the *Evening Gazette*, she felt indignant; but she quickly decided that she acted wisely in treating little Lawson so well; it paid to be on the right side of a man who could write like that, with such a clever, satirical humor.

Late in the afternoon Miss Bertram received an invitation from the manager of the Globe Theatre to occupy a box that night. This, too, she regarded as a sign of success, and she decided to attend the performance with her mother. She made a careful toilet, very simple, very dark, the only conspicuous feature being a large picture hat with long black plumes, which she knew to be extremely becoming. She ordered a carriage, with a twinge of feeling at the thought of the cost; but this item was all part of

an investment on which she soon expected to realize very satisfactorily. She wished now that she and her mother had gone to one of the quiet and more expensive hotels on Fifth avenue. However, there was no use in worrying about that.

The next morning Mabel Bertram scanned the newspapers. The *Item* and the *Universe* devoted long articles to her troubles with Fischer; the other papers made brief references to it, some of them flippant. The *Item* was the only paper that published her picture. Though disappointed, she said to herself that she had been well advertised. She was particularly pleased by the remark in the *Item* article that she had already received several offers from New York managers, which she was now considering. That was a piece of sheer good luck, and it came from no deceit on her part, either. It gave a sense of superior integrity. All of the papers spoke with approval of Nellie Wilton's acting of the night before. The *Chronicle* remarked that it was a satisfaction to be able to say that this great artist had apparently made a complete recovery from her indisposition; she was now in the most brilliant period of her career, and gave promise of doing some of her finest work during the season to come.

Now, however, that her plans had been carried out, Mabel Bertram felt a sudden weariness and despair. Suppose, after all, that nothing should come of the advertising! Suppose that she should wait here in New York week after week without getting an offer! She knew girls who had been idle for whole seasons—clever and pretty girls, too. She thought of Lena Dayton, who had committed suicide from discouragement. The newspapers, it was true, had raked up something dreadful in Lena Dayton's history; but if she had been employed she would never have had thought of killing herself. Of course, Mabel Bertram reasoned, she could go back to the stock company in Baltimore; but she had grown to hate that. The work was hard and thankless, a new part

every week, two performances a day, rehearsals in the morning. It was slavery. Such time as she had out of the theatre was spent in eating, sleeping and dressmaking. Oh, that dressmaking! Standing for hours, and watching her mother sew her fingers off! Then Bennett, the stage-manager—the mere thought of him made her face flush. She had been obliged to use all her tact to hold him at arm's length, and yet to keep on good terms with him. She had now fallen into one of her moods in which she loathed her stage life; but in a few minutes she roused herself. She was a fool to feel like that. Her chance had come, and she was going to make the most of it. She had supported her mother by acting for three years, and she wasn't going to give it up now. No, indeed! The future was more promising than it had ever been.

She passed the morning at the hotel altering some street dresses with her mother. She had a feeling that someone might come whom she ought to see. At eleven o'clock a bellboy appeared at the door with a card. When she glanced at it she started.

"Maurice Dupont!" she said, in a whisper.

Mrs. Bertram looked frightened, as she always did on a great occasion. She stood staring.

"I suppose I ought to go down. We can't see him up here."

"Shall I go?"

"No," said the girl, decidedly. At this critical juncture she felt that she must manage her affairs alone. Her mother would only be in the way.

She had never seen Maurice Dupont, but she had acted in one of his plays in Baltimore and she knew his face from photographs. Besides being a playwright Dupont had lately become one of the strongest road-managers in the country, and he expected to establish a theatre of his own in New York in a year or so. When she entered the parlor she recognized him at once.

"I'm delighted to meet you," he said, in an oily Jewish voice, as she approached him. He had a smooth

face and marked Jewish features, framed in thick, curly black hair. His manner was insinuatingly friendly.

"How awfully kind of you to come to see me," she said, in the obsequious manner that led managers into believing she was easy to get along with.

"I saw your work the other night," he remarked, continuing to smile. He had one of those odiously pleasant faces that are nearly always smiling. His smile had in it something leering, almost repulsive. It seemed like a familiarity.

"Oh, you were there?" she asked, with exaggerated surprise.

He nodded slowly, taking her in with his queer little eyes. She noticed that his lower lip drew down from over his teeth, a habit that gave him an expression of instinctive cruelty.

"It was a good piece of work," he said, "very good." Then he drew his lips together. "What have you done?" he asked.

She gave him a brief account of her career. "H'm!" he said. "You haven't been on the road long enough to be spoiled." He looked away from her. Then he turned, smiling at her again. "How would you like to come with me?" he said, softly.

She clasped her hands. "Oh, Mr. Dupont!" she cried.

"I'm going to put on a play here in a month. There's a part in it I think you could do—the leading part. Woman's play, too."

Her eyes shone. "I'd like to!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how I should like to!" Then she thought of that remark in the *Item* article about her offers.

"Well, why can't you? I can let you have one hundred and fifty a week."

She sat perfectly still and looked over his shoulder. Now that she had time to think, she was afraid of betraying too much joy at the offer. One hundred and fifty a week! At Baltimore, where they had nearly killed her with work, she had received seventy-five! Fischer had paid her only sixty.

"What do you say?" said Dupont, gently.

"Well, I'd love to play with you, Mr. Dupont. I'd love to, and have the benefit of your instruction. I've heard so much about that. But I can't give you an answer to-day. I'm considering three other offers. You weren't the only manager who was in front the other night," she concluded, archly. Then she thought of her mother, and she was glad to be alone with her visitor.

Dupont moved slightly in his seat. He was not accustomed to being treated in this fashion. But he said to himself that he must have her. He wondered if she'd got the big head already.

"If you'll decide to-day, I'll make the offer a hundred and seventy-five. That's the best I can do," he said.

She sat for several minutes without speaking. It was delicious to feel the great man's eyes on her. Dupont had stopped smiling now. She had never hoped for such luck as this, never, never! But she must keep cool.

"What other offers have you had?" the manager asked at last.

"Oh, they were in confidence, Mr. Dupont," she said, in a tone at once beseeching, dignified and injured.

"If the piece goes," he went on, coolly, "I shall probably have a theatre of my own here next season. I think I might put you in for leads."

"Oh, I should like that of all things!" Mabel Bertram exclaimed, exhilarated at the thought of being pitted by such a manager as Dupont against Nellie Wilton. A brilliant future shaped itself in her mind. And only an hour before she had been in the dumps! Well, her life had been full of contrasts.

For a half-hour they talked of stage affairs. Dupont, who had begun theatrical work as an actor and liked to hold himself up as a model to young theatrical aspirants, gave her an account of his life. He was interesting, he was witty, he was delightfully friendly; but after all, thought Miss Bertram, he was oily, he was too suave and complacent. But she felt sure she

could get along with him, and long before he left she had decided what to do.

"I'll send a contract over this afternoon," he said. "I hope you'll sign. We begin rehearsals next Monday. If you come with us, I'll run over the first act with you late in the week."

XI

As Mabel Bertram crossed the hotel corridor she caught a glimpse of Mr. Simmons, but she ignored him. She did not wish to speak with anyone now; her success made her self-sufficient. But when she returned to her room and saw her mother mending one of her old frocks, she felt a rush of tenderness.

"Oh, mamma!" she broke out. "Mr. Dupont has made me a splendid offer—one hundred and seventy-five a week. Next year, if he has a stock company, I'm to be the leading woman." She bent over and kissed the wrinkled face.

Mrs. Bertram slowly removed her glasses, as if they prevented her from grasping the full meaning of the words. She looked at her daughter.

"I'm so glad, Marjorie," she said, using the name by which the girl had been called at home.

Miss Bertram resumed her matter-of-fact manner. "Now, the best thing for us to do is to get out of this hotel and go to some quiet place. But first, though, I think perhaps you'd better run down to Aunt Mary's. She'd love to have you, and the country'd do you a lot of good for a couple of weeks. I can take care of myself now. It's a shame to have you cooped up in the city at this time of year."

"I don't mind the city, dear." Mrs. Bertram glanced helplessly at her daughter. She knew that she would have to do as the girl wished. She did not enjoy visiting her sister, for Mary Warner, who had always been opposed to the stage, liked to criticise and to disparage her daughter. At this moment the little woman could hear

Mary's nasal voice and plaintive drawl: "Well, I don't think the stage is no place for a girl brought up as your Marjorie was, and you know how headstrong she is, Elizabeth. For a girl like her, it's dangerous."

"You haven't had a visit with Aunt Mary for a long while," said the girl, as if divining her mother's opposition.

She went to the window and looked out on the street. "Oh, how dreary the city is in Summer!" she yawned, tapping her mouth with her hand. If the heat continued she thought that she would go down to the Oriental Hotel at Manhattan Beach with her mother for a few days. It would be expensive; but after her economies in Baltimore she should enjoy celebrating her present good fortune. Her mother could make the visit to Aunt Mary's a little later. She decided to say nothing about this project, however. She liked to keep her plans to herself.

Early in the afternoon, on returning from luncheon, which she had taken with her mother at an inexpensive restaurant near the hotel, Mabel Bertram found a bellboy standing at her door, with a newspaper in his hand. "Mr. Simmons told me to give you this, miss," he said, offering her the paper. "He thought you'd like to hear about Miss Wilton's being dead."

"What!" Her eyes looked horror-stricken. Like many actors, she always expressed a little more than she really felt—or a good deal less.

"Nellie Wilton's dead, mother!" she gasped, closing the door.

Mrs. Bertram removed her glasses and stared. "Dead!" she repeated, as people do when they hear shocking news, as if the mind refused to give it hospitality.

Mabel Bertram's eyes were running over the *Item's* headlines. "Yes, this morning, at eleven o'clock." Just at the time, she thought, when she herself was having that talk with Dupont. "Heart disease! She had just gone up stairs, and she dropped on the landing.

Isn't it horrible? When the doctor got there she was dead!"

Mrs. Bertram tried to keep back her tears. Her eyes grew dim and red. "Poor woman!" she whispered.

"Oh, I don't know," the girl said, philosophically, as she stood reading the article. "It's a good way to die. Besides, she'd had her day. What more did she have to live for?"

Mrs. Bertram looked with mute protest at her daughter's profile.

"Think of all the parts she played," Mabel Bertram went on, in a matter-of-fact voice. "Eighty-five! All kinds, too. She's been on the stage since she was thirteen years old. That was why she looked so haggard and old. Only forty-three, they say. H'm! I guess forty-eight would be nearer. Well, she had her day," Miss Bertram repeated, with a sigh. "I wonder what Fischer will do?" She let her hand drop, and the paper touched the floor. Her mother saw her face flush.

"What is it?" Mrs. Bertram asked.

The girl walked to the window, throwing the paper on the bed. She looked out, with one finger pressed against her teeth. "Nothing," she said.

Mrs. Bertram picked up the paper and sank wearily into a chair. She wondered why her daughter was taking Nellie Wilton's death so seriously.

"Suppose Fischer should offer me her place!" Mabel Bertram was thinking. "What a chance to pay him back!" But her ambition was greater than her resentment. Besides, since receiving the offer from Dupont, her resentment against Fischer had considerably lessened. It was directed chiefly now against the manner he had assumed during their last interview. There would be satisfaction enough in receiving an offer from him now. Besides, his offer might enable her to secure better terms from Dupont. Perhaps she could play one man against the other. She felt like laughing. To think that only a few hours before her fortune had looked so dark!

Mrs. Bertram, who sat near the door, rose to open it. The girl had not heard the knock. Her mother glanced at the card a bellboy presented. "Mr. Stevens!" she said, in a frightened voice.

Mabel Bertram's face grew luminous. "Wait!" Mrs. Bertram and the bellboy looked at her. "Never mind! Tell him to come up here." When the door closed, she added, to her mother: "It's too much trouble going down."

When Mr. Stevens appeared Miss Bertram received him with a brisk cordiality of manner that at once placed her on a footing of superiority. It made plain to him that she felt no resentment against anyone associated with Israel Fischer, and that, in spite of the treatment she had received, she was prosperous and happy. From his manner she could see that he was wondering what good fortune had come to her. Actresses so recently discharged from Fischer's theatre did not usually behave like that.

His first speech betrayed the frame of mind in which he had made his approach. "I'm glad to find that you aren't ill-disposed toward us," he said.

She raised both hands slightly. "Oh, Mr. Stevens!" she said. Then she added, with a lift of the eyebrows: "You know my mother?"

He offered his hand cordially. "I'm very glad to meet you," he said, forgetting, in his excitement, his encounter with Mrs. Bertram at the theatre.

He placed his hat on the table and dropped into a seat, impressively ignoring the bed.

"Of course, I had nothing to do with your little experience with the Colonel," he said.

Mabel Bertram looked at him from beneath lowered eyelids. "Oh, I know that," she said, as if acquitting him of a crime.

"I thought the Colonel made a mistake," he went on. "I told him so. But you know what Wilton was." He lowered his voice as one does in speaking of the recent dead.

"I know," she said, reproducing his confidential manner.

"Terrible, isn't it? You've heard it, haven't you? Billy Simmons——"

"Yes," she said, quietly, as if afraid of having Simmons dragged into the discussion. "I've just read about it."

"I was the first one at the theatre to get the news over the 'phone," he said, importantly. "They asked me to break it to the Colonel. It was awful!"

"How did he take it?"

"Oh, just as I knew he would. It didn't seem to phase him a bit. But I know it hit him hard. It's a bad blow for a man of his age. He's nearly sixty, you know. He was reading a play when I told him. He went on reading for a minute, or he pretended to. I stood there waiting to see what he had to say about closing the theatre, and all that. After a while he looked up and gave me orders in the coolest manner, just as if nothing had happened. We'll be dark till next Monday. She's to be buried on Friday, probably. Little Church Around the Corner, I suppose. But we're going right on with rehearsals just the same. The Colonel had a call put up for tomorrow. He's reviving 'The Magic Lantern.' Funny, isn't it? Wilton made one of her biggest hits in that old piece."

Mabel Bertram was leaning on her elbow, with one hand on her chin. "He's a queer man," she said, absently, biting her fingers. She wished that Stevens would come to the point; but she meant to give him time.

Stevens apparently understood her feeling. "The Colonel wants you for Wilton's part in 'The Magic Lantern,'" he said.

She wrinkled her forehead. "I'm afraid he can't have me." She could not deny herself the luxury of saying that. Her eyes turned toward the door. Her mother rose nervously. "There's someone there, I think," said Miss Bertram, carelessly.

"Have you signed with someone else?" Stevens asked. Before she had

time to reply her mother had passed to her a large envelope.

"Tell the boy not to wait," she said. "No," she replied, as she glanced over the contract Dupont had sent. She was enjoying the dramatic effect of the situation. She was careful not to injure it by over-acting. "No," she repeated, slowly. "But Mr. Dupont wants me to sign this." She passed the contract to Stevens. As he read it, the two women sat in silence. Mrs. Bertram kept glancing from her daughter to Stevens. The girl had assumed an air of aloofness, as if she had only a judicial interest in the matter under consideration.

Stevens placed the contract on the table without folding it, as if it were a precious document. "That's a very good chance," he said, with a sigh.

"I haven't decided to sign yet," said Mabel Bertram. She saw that he looked surprised. "My plans are altogether in the air," she went on.

"The Colonel will be disappointed," Stevens remarked, as if Dupont's contract had made any thought of the girl's return to Fischer's company not worth mentioning.

"Did he send you here to offer me the part in 'The Magic Lantern?'"

"Not exactly." Stevens felt that he was managing his mission very badly. "He wants you to join the company as leading woman. He wanted me to bring you over to the office with me and see what arrangements could be made."

Miss Bertram smiled. "I'm not well enough to go over there," she said, carelessly. "But if he thinks it worth his while to come here——" She held out both her hands in a gesture of deprecation. Stevens rose. He had the sense of having been dismissed.

"I'll tell him what you say," he remarked, taking his hat from the table. Then he went out hastily, not including the little black figure in the bow he made at the door.

Mrs. Bertram was awe-stricken by her daughter's boldness. "Do you really suppose he'll come?" she said.

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't

care much whether he does or not. But oh, it's so good to be able to call him down. I've got him just where I want him," the girl exulted. "I guess I'm the first actress besides Nellie Wilton who ever dared to treat him like that." She sat and pretended to read, but her mother discovered, from close glances, that she was only waiting; she kept smiling as her eyes listlessly followed the pages of her book.

At three o'clock the bellboy brought up Fischer's card.

Mabel Bertram held it high in the air. "Victory!" she cried, to her mother. "Tell him to come up," she added to the bellboy, treating him to the coldness with which she intended to receive the manager.

XII

MISS BERTRAM observed that Fischer looked as if he had grown ten years older since her last interview with him. His manner with her was just as it had been before—impassive, severe. He seemed to be unconscious of her own assumption of dignity.

"Mr. Stevens has told me of your offer from Dupont," he said. "Of course, I can't compete with that."

She looked at him without speaking. She instinctively felt as if she must steel herself against him. His imperturbable manner fascinated and frightened her, and gave her a feeling of helplessness.

"But Dupont is a mere speculator, you know. If this new piece of his fails, he won't be able to do anything for you. On the other hand, if you come with me, your future is certain. You'll have all of Miss Wilton's rôles, and if you have as much ability as I give you credit for you'll be as successful as she was. More so," he added, absently, "because you're so much younger. I have some very interesting work mapped out for this season," he concluded, brightening somewhat.

"What terms are you going to offer

me?" she asked, falling into his quiet manner.

"The first season I will pay you seventy-five a week if——"

She burst out laughing. "Oh, Colonel Fischer, things have changed very much since last Monday night. I'm not the same woman," she cried, dramatically. "Here, I have four offers," she went on, forgetting that her mother was present and, in her excitement, almost believing what she said to be true. "Every one of them is splendid, and yet you offer me seventy-five a week! Why, Colonel Fischer," she chided, as if enjoying a delightful bit of humor, "it's absurd. It is, really."

She had an added pleasure in seeing him turn pale. She knew that if she had spoken to him in that way in his office a few days before, he would have dismissed her from his presence and from his company.

"I was going to say," he resumed, as if she had not spoken, "that after the first season I will double your salary. The third year I'll give you two hundred a week."

"You want me to sign a contract for three years, then?"

He bowed. "After that, if you have the success I think you are sure to have under my management—under my management," he repeated, with cold significance, "I will star you."

For a moment she almost stopped breathing. But when she thought of the seventy-five dollars a week, she shook her head. "I couldn't live and dress on that salary the first year. I——"

"Your dresses will be provided," he interrupted.

"Well, to keep up my position here in New York. It's dreadfully expensive for a woman." She waited for him to speak; as he said nothing she resumed, shaking her head, "No, I couldn't think of accepting those terms."

"Of course, you will be recognized as my leading woman in Miss Wilton's old position," he said.

In spite of herself, a little sneer appeared in her face. "That would

be very nice, but it wouldn't pay my bills the first year. I couldn't think of taking less than one hundred and fifty a week the first season, three hundred the second. There are my terms, Colonel Fischer. Dupont is to give me much more at the start."

He sat in silence for a long time. Mrs. Bertram kept clasping her hands. "I had another woman in mind for the position," he said, "but I thought I'd make you the offer first. I can let you have a hundred the first year, a hundred and fifty the second. That's the best I can do. Miss Wilton began with me at twenty-five a week. She died a rich woman. You must remember, too, that I made her. I shall try to make you. During the first year I shall expect to work pretty hard with you. You have some bad faults."

The criticism subdued her. Fischer shrewdly seized the moment for leaving. "You might let me know tonight what your decision is," he said. "If I don't hear from you by eight o'clock I will consider that you have refused my offer."

He left her with the sense that she had been beaten. She had expected to humiliate him, and now she wondered vaguely if she herself had not been humiliated. "There's something terrible about that man," she said to her mother. "He gives me the creeps. I don't want to be in his old company, even if I can step into Nellie Wilton's shoes," she went on, assuming the tone that she would have enjoyed taking with Fischer if she had dared. Then she began to pace the room. "What to do? What to do?" she said to herself, as if her mother were not present. "It's just about as bad having too much good luck as not having any at all."

Her mother looked at her helplessly, sighed and then resumed her sewing, drawing into retirement behind her glasses. The girl continued to pace the room with her hands at her temples. Suddenly she exclaimed: "I think I'll go out and walk; then, perhaps, I can make up my mind."

Her mother deftly turned the dress

she was altering and began to sew on the other side. A long white thread hung from each corner of her mouth. She said nothing. In spite of her apparent absorption in her work, she kept watching the girl.

"I'll be back in an hour," said her daughter, when she had drawn on her gloves. "I think I'll walk up to the Park."

A breeze had blown up early in the afternoon, and the shady side of Fifth avenue was reasonably cool. Few people were out, however, and the closed houses on either side seemed to frown stonily. Mabel Bertram was in one of those agonies of doubt that bring nervous women to the verge of tears. "Oh, to know what to do! to know what to do!" she kept saying to herself. When a handsome young man in a pearl-gray suit and a soft white felt hat bowed to her, she did not recognize him.

"Have you forgotten all your old friends now that you're on the top of the heap?" said a rich baritone voice.

"Oh, Mr. Foster!" she exclaimed.

"Are you learning a new part?" he asked, offering his hand. "You look as absorbed——"

"Oh, I'm in dreadful trouble!" Then she laughed at his look of solicitude. "I have two gorgeous offers, and I don't know which to take."

"Well, I wish I had that trouble," he replied, with a deep gurgle. "I know what one of the offers is. The Colonel told me this noon. I was at the theatre when we got the news of Miss Wilton's death. Terrible, isn't it? I always did admire the Colonel's nerve," he went on, laughing immoderately. "He seemed to think it was the most natural thing in the world that you should come back to us if he wanted you."

"Hasn't the whole thing been dreadful?" she said, falling into insincerity again, her eyes wide open and her face deeply serious.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, flippantly. "It's been a mighty good thing for you. You know I never was one of Wilton's worshippers."

"Oh, yes," she acknowledged, ab-

sently. Then she looked at him with an almost pathetic appeal in her eyes. "Won't you walk up with me and help me with this?"

"Delighted!" he exclaimed; "I'm out just for a walk myself."

"To show off your beautiful new suit?" she insinuated.

"Well, partly," he acknowledged. "I hear you've had all the managers in town running after you," he said, as they started up the Avenue together.

"Oh, that's all a fake!" she cried, with one of those outbursts of truth that surprised her and gave her a sense of superior frankness. "I've only had two. But those two will be the death of me if I can't make up my mind," she added, with a despairing smile. She rapidly gave him the particulars of the two offers. "Now, what shall I do?" she said, as if the decision would somehow be easy for him to make.

"Well—" He walked on for a few moments as if absorbed in thought. Then he smiled down at her. "It would be awfully nice to have you in the company."

She flushed and turned her head away from him. She wondered why she had not thought more about him since their acquaintance began; with his make-up off he seemed very handsome; then, too, she liked his frank, hearty manner. He seemed really disinterested. She had fallen into the habit of thinking that her associates on the stage always had axes to grind.

"But still," he went on, growing more serious, "I can't help thinking that Dupont's offer is safer."

"Safer?" she repeated.

"Yes. Dupont is younger than the Colonel, and he's in with the younger crowd of managers, the men that are sure to have everything in their hands in a very few years. The Colonel's old, and he's conservative, and the new fellows don't like him, and they're just watching for a chance to down him. They can't hurt him here in New York, but they can on the road. They keep him out of a lot of

the best theatres. I wish you could see some of the theatres we played in last season. Awful! I remember in Pittsburgh, Tim McIntyre followed us in 'The Dazzler.' His bills were plastered all over ours during the last few days of our engagement. It made the Colonel wild."

"Yes, yes; I know," she said. "But think of his promising to star me!"

"But you know what his promises are. Besides, now that Wilton is dead, there's no knowing what will happen to the theatre. It's her theatre, you know. People always associate her with it. That was why the Colonel would never let her out of the bill if he could possibly help it, and that was what really killed her in the end—the overwork. If you took her place you'd be compared with her all the time, and you'd simply have to fight against her reputation. It would mean a fight for you against odds."

"Oh, dear!" She looked into his face, and they both laughed.

"He promised to feature me when I signed with him, after my first season. But I hadn't been with him six weeks before I saw Wilton would no more think of letting him do it—!" Foster shrugged his shoulders. "And then I'm on pins and needles all the time. He may give me my two weeks' notice any day. He——"

"Why don't you go and see Dupont?" she cried. "He may not have engaged——"

"Oh, I think I'll let Dupont come and see me if he wants to," the actor laughed. "Besides, the Colonel's got me nicely tied down by a contract. I can't leave him for two years. That is, unless he's willing to release me."

"What in the world did you do that for?" she said, impatiently, as if the matter had some personal effect upon her.

"Oh, I was hard up and I needed a job bad. I'd thrown up a good chance in the West just to get a New York engagement, and I'd been walking the streets here and living on borrowed money for nearly six months. My clothes were giving out. In an-

other month I couldn't have kept up my fashionable front. Then where should I have been?"

She drew a long sigh. "We're all in the same box, aren't we?" she said.

"If Dupont likes you," Foster continued, "and hits it off with his play, I think you'll be all right. Perhaps he'll star you, too. However, if you make a hit with him, you'll easily be able, after a year or two, to get somebody to send you out with a company."

"Ah, but the great thing is to go out under the right management. That's everything."

"Yes," he replied, with a quiet enjoyment of her shrewdness, "and that's the chief reason why I advise you to steer clear of Fischer. He's a back number, or I'm mightily mistaken. He can't originate any more; he can't strike out in new directions. He can't keep track of the tastes of the public. The theatre's become a hobby with him, instead of a business. He loves the work for its own sake. He's becoming a sort of dilettante. Last year he had a bully success in 'The Rover.' It ought to have run all season; but just when the people were beginning to flock to the theatre he took it off."

"What did he do that for?"

"Simply because things were running too smoothly, and he wanted something to do. There's nothing he likes better than rehearsing and breaking new people in. He's a dilettante; yes, just a dilettante," Foster repeated, pleased with the word.

"So he might get rid of me after he'd broken me in," Miss Bertram at once exclaimed, "and engage someone else? Still," she added, hastily, "think how he stood by Nellie Wilton!"

"Ah, she made him," Foster replied, with a nod of the head. "She had the whip-hand over him, and, by Jove! she used it. I've seen her!"

Then they began to talk about Nellie Wilton, and Foster told stories of her extraordinary grit. "Poor thing!" said Miss Bertram; "I shall

leave the stage before I'm fifty, whatever happens. I certainly sha'n't ever allow myself to be a Superfluous Laggs."

She asked about his career, and he told her frankly of his failures since he had left school fifteen years before. He had studied law, he had been a bank clerk, he had tried ranching in the West. "So I ended by becoming a matinée actor," he laughed. "Oh, I know I'm not much at it; but as long as I make a living I don't care. I get kind of sick of being a 'beauty actor,' though. It seems kind of unmanly."

He was looking straight ahead; so she had a chance to observe him stealthily. How handsome he was, she thought, and how unaffected! Like most affected people, she was severe on affectation in others. What a pleasant fellow he must be in the company! All those girls at Fischer's probably adored him. Still, he didn't seem to be in the least spoiled.

When they reached Central Park Miss Bertram said she felt tired, and they sat on a bench. "I've been through such a lot in the past few days," she explained. • An empty hansom cab came toward them slowly.

"How would you like to take a little turn through the Park?" Foster asked.

Her heart jumped, but she looked with cold inquiry at the cab. Then, as the observing driver drew up before them, she shook her head. "No, I must go home." She wondered why she felt so weak; but she was very happy. She would have liked to sit on that bench for the rest of the day.

"Sha'n't we drive down?" he asked, and she shook her head again. She looked at him with a faint smile. She knew that her face was pale and that her eyes had a languid droop that was very interesting. "You're awfully good," she said. "In a minute I'll feel rested. Then we can take a car."

On the way back he asked her if she had made up her mind about her plans. "Yes," she said, lifting her eyes toward him and then lowering

her glance. "I shall sign with Dupont."

She did not look at him again for a few moments. When they reached the hotel she offered her hand, without asking him to come in and meet her mother, as he thought she might do. "I'll let you know where we are when we're settled," she said, as if something were understood between them.

"Thank you." He walked away, a little dazed.

As she approached the elevator Miss Bertram caught a glimpse of Mr. Simmons. He was probably waiting for her, she said to herself. Then she felt a loathing for him. How impertinent some of those hotel clerks were! Just because he had done her a little service he thought—She saw that he was about to approach her, and she hastily turned into the ladies' waiting-room, without taking pains not to let him see that she was avoiding him. She sat by the window and stared into the street. She kept seeing the face of Roswell Foster, and she heard the ring of his deep laughter.

This was one of the few moments in her life when she felt afraid of herself. Her interest plainly lay in signing with Dupont; but she wanted to go back to Fischer. She thought of all those girls in Fischer's company. She had seen Roswell Foster talking and laughing with several of them. At the time she had paid no attention to them. Oh, what a miserable thing it was to be a woman! She had hoped to be able to pit Fischer against Dupont; but she had not the strength or the courage to send word to Dupont that Fischer had made her an offer. If she did, she might lose that splendid chance.

She rose from her seat and walked to the elevator. Simmons had disappeared.

When she reached the room her mother observed a light in her eyes that she had never seen there before. "Where's the contract?" the girl asked, feverishly.

"There," her mother replied, "on the table."

Without removing her hat, she seized a pen and wrote her signature. "I've done it," she said. "Now ring for a bellboy, and I'll have it sent away."

When the boy had left the room she burst out crying. "Oh, I'm so miserable. I almost wish I'd never come to New York!"

XIII

On turning from the hotel Foster said to himself: "I wish I were married." This thought often occurred to him; it seemed the solution of nearly all his difficulties. If he only had a little place of his own, with Minnie Lane to take care of him, then he could keep straight and feel something like respect for himself. Every day some new temptation came to him. Now, this girl—what right did he have even for a moment to let himself take more than a friendly interest in her? He decided that he would keep away from her, for a while, at any rate. He had pledged himself to one girl, the best girl he had ever known, the gentlest, the sweetest—He checked himself suddenly. Why not go and have a talk about her with Fischer? He'd surely find the old man at the theatre.

At the stage entrance Foster met a group of reporters. They had just had an interview with Stevens in the green-room. One of them saluted him; the others looked envious, as if they regretted not knowing him.

"Oh, hello, Jimmie Lawson," he said.

Lawson offered his hand with a cordiality intensified by the consciousness of his audience. "Well, this is a great day, isn't it?"

"Been to see the Colonel?"

"Yes; but he wouldn't see us. He shut himself up in his office and sent the faithful watch-dog down. Stevens has been giving us a great song-and-dance about Wilton. You'd think that Sara Bernhardt and Duse weren't in it!"

Foster smiled, glancing from Lawson to the other reporters. "Mr. Foster ought to have some stories about Miss Wilton," one of them remarked carelessly, ignoring the formality of an introduction.

Foster shook his head with decision. "No, I'd like to help you out if I could; but I haven't anything to tell. If I had, I'd have to keep my mouth shut for fear of the Colonel. He won't let us be interviewed or anything like that, you know. But it's funny," he went on, addressing the group with the confidential frankness that made people like him at first meeting; "all the time I've been with the Colonel I don't believe I've exchanged a dozen words with Miss Wilton, except about stage business or something like that. She's always been a kind of sphinx; that is," he added, with a modest smile, "so far as I was concerned."

"Oh, Rosie, you're foxy," said Jimmie Lawson, laying his hand on the actor's arm. "Now, I'll bet you have a lot of good copy in that head of yours."

Foster made his escape with a laugh, which he suddenly checked when the stage door reminded him of the tragedy that had rested so lightly on his mind. The old doorkeeper was dozing in his chair. He had had a busy day.

"Can I see the Colonel?" Foster asked.

The doorkeeper nodded. "I guess so. He's up there. He's keepin' out of the way of these damn reporters."

As Foster sprang up the steps it occurred to him that he would make a great blunder if he spoke of Minnie Lane to the Colonel now. In coming to the theatre he had acted on a foolish impulse. He could not go back, however, now that he was so near the Colonel's door. So he decided to go in and ask if he could be of any help at Nellie Wilton's funeral. They might want him for one of the pall-bearers.

"Oh, come in—come in," said the manager, removing his glasses and looking up with a kindly smile. His

face was pale and his eyes looked blurred.

He nodded toward a seat near his desk. When Foster referred to the funeral, he shook his head. "No, there'll be no pall-bearers. We don't want to make any show, if we can help it. Miss Wilton hated anything like that. It's all arranged. The funeral will take place at the Little Church Around the Corner, at eleven o'clock. To keep the crowd out, we've decided—that is, Mr. Hathaway has decided—to issue tickets. Stevens is having them printed now. They can be secured by writing or by application at the box-office. The members of the company will each receive two."

They discussed other details in connection with the funeral, then Foster rose.

"Don't go; I'd like to have a little talk with you." In spite of himself Foster's face showed surprise. On observing it, Fischer smiled. "Sit down, my boy, sit down. Don't treat me as if I were an ogre or a machine. I suppose I don't seem quite like a human being to a young fellow like you, but I assure you I am human. I'm very human," he added, his face lighting for a moment and then growing dull again. "I like my fellow-mortals as much as you do, and I say that at a time when I feel farther away from them than I've ever felt." He sighed, and looked sharply at the young fellow. Foster, unable to think of anything to say, flushed and nervously moved his feet.

"Here you are, a strapping fellow of thirty," Fischer went on. "You aren't more than thirty, are you?"

"Thirty-one!" Foster replied, feeling like a child.

"Well, I'm nearly sixty-one," Fischer said, gravely. "You're at the beginning and I'm at the end."

"Oh, no," said Foster, with a smile. "You're good for twenty years yet, Colonel."

Fischer waved his hand in deprecation of the compliment.

"And now, after a lifetime of work, what have I to show for it? Nothing!"

"How about your theatre, sir?"

Fischer shrugged his shoulders. "Now that Miss Wilton is gone," he said, bitterly, "what does my theatre amount to?"

"But think of all it stands for," Foster insisted, bewildered. He was asking himself what could be the matter with the Colonel. He had never seen this side of the manager's character.

"All it stands for!" Fischer repeated, wearily. "A lot the public care about that! All the public care for is for a personality, for a man or a woman who amuses them. As long as they're amused, they show gratitude. When they are no longer amused, they go somewhere else. What do they care about art? What do they know about it? Nothing! Why, if I were to die to-morrow, who'd care? There'd be a few friendly notices in the papers, a few blackguardly kicks, and then I'd be forgotten."

"I don't think you're altogether fair to the public, Colonel," said Foster. "There isn't another man in the profession——"

"Oh, yes, I know," Fischer interrupted. "They've been telling me that for the last twenty years. There's not another man who's done so much for the drama. I've heard it when my house has been empty for weeks at a time. I've given 'em Shakespeare, and they've told me I was the greatest manager in the world, and then they've stayed away. I've given them the finest stage settings that could be seen in the country—as fine as you could see in any country—and I've seen weeks when my receipts in the box office hardly paid the scene painters."

"But you've had successful seasons, Colonel. Why, since I've been with you——"

Fischer twisted uneasily in his seat. He was in the state of mind when he wanted to drain the last drop of his misery.

"Oh, I know, I've had some good business. But the successes haven't paid off the failures. Where one success has brought me in a few thousand dollars, I've lost lots of thousands

more on a failure. And while I have been losing money on Shakespeare and the old English comedies, the other managers up and down Broadway have been turning people away from the melodramas and their dirty French farces."

Fischer drew a deep breath. For a moment he did not speak. Foster looked down at his hands and wished that he knew how to talk better. These confidences embarrassed him. "Sometimes I wish I had spent my life differently," Fischer finally went on. "If I had gone into the law or medicine, into almost any other profession, with the same expenditure of time and effort I might have some sort of position in the community and a competence for my old age. Now, as the result of my work, I have a lot of enemies who are watching like a pack of ghouls to see me go under, and a lot of obligations that I've got to meet. At this minute, up and down Broadway, they're pointing at me and asking one another what I'm going to do now that Miss Wilton is gone. And a dozen managers are scheming and plotting to get my theatre away from me. That shows how I'm honored in the profession I've done so much for!" he sneered. "God! I'm almost tempted to chuck up the whole business, buy a farm somewhere in Canada and live out the rest of my days in peace."

"But you can get someone else to take Miss Wilton's place, Colonel. After all, there are other actresses. Even if——"

"Bah! as soon as they knew I wanted 'em they'd take advantage of me, too. They're ingrates, like the rest of 'em. I've just offered the position to a woman—that Bertram woman. She knew I needed her, and she tried to soak me. Perhaps it's just as well," he added, his tone softening. "She would be too difficult. Well," he concluded, with a sigh, "I suppose we must have someone. I've just telegraphed a woman in Cleveland—Miss Ashmore. If she doesn't make good I may have to close my theatre."

"I'm sorry for that, Colonel."

Fischer looked up suddenly. "Ah, you're all right," he said. "If we shut up you're sure of an engagement somewhere else. A good-looking fellow like you——"

"I wasn't thinking of that, Colonel," said Foster, with a simple dignity that carried weight. It made Fischer quiet for a moment.

"You're a good fellow, Foster," he said at last. "You've been a comfort to me since you've been with me. I don't often pay compliments to members of my company, but you deserve that. I don't think you're much of an actor, you know. When you get to be forty-five years old, and fat, you'll find the theatre a mighty poor place. Why don't you get out of it?" he suddenly asked. "Why don't you go into something that'll give you a chance to settle down and lead a decent, quiet life?"

"Well, I try to do that now, sir," Foster replied, trying to smile, but looking uncomfortable.

"You want to get married, don't you?" Fischer asked, with a sharp glance.

Foster nodded.

"You want to marry that little girl you spoke to me about the other night?"

Foster's face grew crimson. "I do, sir."

"I thought so," said Fischer.

"What made you think so, Colonel?"

Fischer smiled. "Oh, other young men in my company have tried to secure engagements for young ladies. And you were so shy about praising your protégée that I knew something was in the wind. Now, if you had only taken a friendly interest in her, you'd have been more emphatic."

Foster looked embarrassed. "I didn't want to say too much, Colonel."

For a moment the Colonel seemed absorbed. Then he looked up and said: "I suppose you know that I never allow husband and wife to be members of my company?"

"I knew that, sir."

"Then why did you——?" Fischer lifted his eyelashes in inquiry.

"Simply because—well, because it was the only way I could help her."

"Never been on the stage, I think you said?" Without waiting for a reply, the manager went on: "And yet, knowing what you do about the life, you'd like to have your wife go into it?"

"She's not my wife yet, sir."

"Well, keep her out of it. Keep her out of it," said Fischer, with the air of ending the interview and with a resumption of his severity, in which Foster recognized a regret for the confidences of a few moments before. "She's much better at home. And if you're a wise man, you'll keep out of matrimony altogether, or give up acting. An actor has no business to get married, anyway."

Foster left the room with the feeling of having been suddenly ejected. As he stepped down the stairs his face was hot. He walked quickly up Broadway to the big apartment house on the West Side, near the Park, where Minnie Lane occupied two tiny rooms. When he arrived there he found her at home working on a special article for the woman's page of the *Chronicle*.

"I've read about Miss Wilton," she said, thinking he had come to bring her the news. "I'm writing an article about her. You must help me with it. What's the matter?" she asked, looking up into his face. "Has it upset you?"

He sank into a chair and rubbed his face with his hands.

"It's nothing," he said. "Only I've been having a funny interview with the Colonel."

He told her about the Colonel's talk, omitting the references to herself.

"Will it make any difference to you, do you think?" she asked, nervously.

"Oh, I guess not; for the present, at any rate. He'll go on for a few months, whatever happens. Perhaps the new leading woman will make good; I don't know. But he may cut salaries."

"I suppose you didn't—you couldn't speak to him about me?" she asked, timidly.

He hesitated. "Well, I did, dear," he replied. "But there's no chance." When he had explained his meaning, he went on: "I've a good mind to look around for something else. The Colonel doesn't care a rap for me. If he could get a cheaper man he'd let me go in a minute. God! what a business it is! Up to-day, down to-morrow. I suppose all the boys in the company are feeling blue. Anyway, the season hasn't really opened yet, and some good chances are likely to come along."

"Of course," she said, reassuringly. "But please don't think about me, Frank. I want you to stay where you are, unless, of course, something else comes up. I can get along all right," she added, cheerfully. "Why, I expect to get two columns out of my new special. It's about the Fall fashions. You'll laugh when you read it, and they're going to give me all the space I need for the article on Miss Wilton's home life."

"Her home life!" Foster repeated. "Did she have any?" he asked, thinking mechanically of his talk with Fischer.

XIV

On the day after signing the contract with Dupont, Mabel Bertram received a note in which the manager apologized for not sending the manuscript of her part. The typewriter had disappointed him, but the part would be ready in a day or two. It did not reach her, however, till the morning of Nellie Wilton's funeral. She read it over at one sitting. Her mother, who sat near her, observed the look of disappointment in her face.

"I can't make head or tail of it!" she said. "It's the craziest dialogue. The idea of their sending the part without letting me read or hear the play! That's Dupont all over. Oh, well, maybe it will be all right." She stretched her arms and yawned.

"Half-past ten," she said. "Nellie Wilton's funeral is to be at eleven. I'd like to go. It's only a block from here."

"But, dear," her mother protested, "think how it would look."

"Pooh! A lot I care about that! Besides," the girl added, inconsistently, "I could wear my thick black veil, and no one would recognize me."

"I wouldn't, dear."

The girl rose from her seat. "Oh, well, I guess I won't. I couldn't, anyway; I haven't any ticket. I suppose there'll be a big crowd around the church. I'm going out to do a little shopping," she concluded, with a parting glance at the little figure.

She passed through the room again, wearing a heavy wrap, for the weather had grown suddenly cold, and with a brown veil pinned over her hat. "I'll be back for lunch, mamma," she said at the door.

In the hotel corridor she looked about for Mr. Simmons. On an impulse she had decided to resume acquaintance with him; but he was not at his desk nor at his usual lounging-place. At this moment she felt well disposed toward everyone. For the time she had ceased to think even of Roswell Foster, whose even, white teeth and deep laugh had been haunting her for days. The blood mounted to her cheeks when she met him face to face in the street.

"Oh, Miss Bertram," he said, lifting his top-hat with his black-gloved hand. Fine drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. The white teeth flashed at her, and with a thrill she heard the deep laugh again. "I was just hurrying to the funeral," he explained. "I thought I was late, but now I find I have plenty of time."

"Miss Wilton's funeral? Oh, yes; this is the day, isn't it?" He looked surprised, and she added, quickly: "I had forgotten it was to-day. Poor woman! I thought of going, but then it seemed—well, under the circumstances——"

He nodded absently. "I have a

ticket in my pocket," he said, "if you want to go."

"But don't you think it would look—well, kind of queer?"

"Oh, no. Besides, in that big place, who'd notice?"

They had turned down the street in the direction of the church. Across Fifth avenue they could see the gathering crowd. The carriages had not as yet begun to arrive.

"If you really think they wouldn't notice!" She pulled the veil down over her face and held up her chin. "Could anyone recognize me now?"

"I don't think so," he replied, smiling.

"My mother will be dreadfully shocked," she said, as if to the young fellow this fact in some measure excused her going to the funeral. "But I really did want to go," she went on, brightening. "That woman interested me so. I can remember her ever since I was a little girl. She was the first actress I ever saw, and I used to wish that I could be like her. So you can imagine what a strange feeling I had the other night when I took her place! Only last Monday night! Think of it! It seems ages ago, so many things have happened to me since," she concluded, her eyes shining at him through the veil.

He could not explain the impulse that made him draw nearer to her. His arm lightly touched her arm. For a moment they walked together in silence. He suddenly felt as if he had known her a long time and as if he had in some way misjudged her. When they reached the crowd she drew away from him.

"Can we sit together?" she asked.

"I'm afraid not," he replied. "The company is to meet at the church steps and we're to walk in after the mourners. But I'll watch out for you after the service. I'd like to walk home with you, if you'll let me."

As soon as he had made this offer he regretted it. He thought with remorse of Minnie Lane. She would expect to meet him, too. As he called himself a weak, blundering

fool, he heard Mabel Bertram say, as if from a distance: "I shall want to sit in the back of the church, anyway, where I can slip out early, and no one will notice me. I'll look for you after it's over, on the other side of the street."

The crowd made way for them, and they passed into the church. In the vestibule Mabel Bertram smiled and nodded to her companion, walking to one of the side aisles, where she found an empty pew in the last row. Foster glanced at her across the pews. Again he saw her big eyes burning through the veil, and again he blamed himself. Then he looked quickly about for Minnie Lane, but he could not find her. He walked back to the vestibule, where two actors of Fischer's company had just taken their position. One of them was the little comedian who dressed with Foster at the theatre.

"Say, look here, Rosie," he said, "was that Mabel Bertram who went into the church with you?"

Foster bowed. "Met her in the street," he said, "and gave her a ticket."

"Well, if she hasn't got the crust! Upon my word!" exclaimed the comedian. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, too, Rosie! I've got a good mind to tell the Colonel. Well, well!"

"Go ahead!" Foster laughed. "What's the harm? She wanted to come."

"Doesn't he look swell, though?" said the comedian to his companion, dismissing the matter from his mind and looking at Foster's black gloves and black frock-coat. "Isn't he a shining light? Rosie, your clothes ought to be worth a hundred a week to you."

At eleven o'clock the church was so crowded that many people who had been provided with cards of admission were unable to find seats. The altar had been profusely decorated with flowers sent by friends and admirers of the dead actress. It was plain that most of the people had come from curiosity. They eyed one another

critically. They whispered in twos and in groups. It was nearly half-past eleven when the funeral procession arrived. Then the organ reverberated, and the body of Nellie Wilton was borne slowly forward in an oaken casket. It was followed by her husband, who supported Nellie Wilton's only sister, heavily draped in black, and by Israel Fischer, who walked with Stevens. Then came Nellie Wilton's servants, including the faithful Thérèse, who was sobbing, and the members of the company.

As the procession moved, eyes were strained in the search for celebrities. Mabel Bertram could hear the comments around her: "There's Fanny Ring. See? The one with the big hat with plumes. And look! there's Nat Hamilton. Isn't he handsome? Just as handsome off the stage as he is on. Getting kind of old, though. Shows it in his walk. They say he dyes his mustache. Ah! Look at Mary Barnes. Isn't she sweet? Hasn't she got a lovely complexion? Funny there aren't any managers here! He always went his own gait, though, didn't he, old Fischer? They say that's why so many of the other managers hate him so. Did you ever see such a lot of yellow hair? I should think women would be ashamed to go to funerals like that. It seems almost indecent."

Then silence fell, and the voice of the officiating clergyman rang through the church: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

The spectators seemed bored by the service and relieved when it was finished. Some of them hurried out of the church before the funeral procession returned to the carriages. The crowd still hung about the streets, like the crowd inside, eagerly watching for the familiar faces of the theatrical celebrities. Mabel Bertram crossed to the opposite sidewalk and stood in a doorway. The service had

stirred her as a church service or an emotional play always did. She felt ashamed now that she had gone to the funeral. The impertinence of the behavior of the people around her, of the attitude of all the curiosity-seekers there, sickened her. She thought of hurrying away, but she could not break her promise to Roswell Foster. What an odd name for a first name, she thought—Roswell. She wondered what his friends called him. Then she glanced down, and in the middle of the street she saw Foster talking with a group of girls and men. He looked up toward her as if to let her know that he was trying to reach her. As he left the group, she saw a young girl reach out and touch him on the arm, and she heard the girl say: "Oh, Frank!"

XV

On hearing his name called, Foster turned quickly. His face lighted with pleasure. "Well, little girl, I thought I had lost you," he said. "Where have you been?"

"I've been with Kate Lester, of the *Item*. We've been making out a list of the big people here. Kate's been helping me. She knows everybody. And now I must hurry down to the *Chronicle*. They want me to turn my copy in early. Will you come with me as far as the elevated station?"

She noticed that he looked confused. "I'd go all the way down with you, if I could," he said. "But I—I told Miss Bertram I'd walk up to her hotel with her," he said, with a frankness that cost him an effort. When he saw the look of reproach in her face, his frankness left him. "She wants to talk over some business, I think," he said, ashamed of deceiving her, yet unable to resist the temptation to justify himself and to relieve her from anxiety.

"Oh, that's all right," said Miss Lane, deepening his shame by accepting his explanation at once. "But think of *her* coming here! Where is she?"

He promised himself to explain that Miss Bertram's coming was all his fault; but at the moment he did not have time. "She's standing in the doorway over there—the yellow house. She has a brown veil on."

Miss Lane looked in the opposite direction. Then she let her eyes wander slowly in a circle till they had reached their starting-point again. Mabel Bertram watched the movement, and met it by gazing intently at the coffin of the dead actress, which passed slowly by in the hearse on its way to Greenwood.

"Nice figure!" said Minnie Lane, as she turned toward Madison avenue. "Good-bye, Frank!"

He looked wistfully after her for a moment, feeling like a coward. Then he walked to the place where Miss Bertram was standing, and apologized for having kept her waiting. "I think I must have known nearly every one in that church," he said, with a smile.

At Fifth avenue they turned and walked toward Madison Square. "How I like this cold, bracing weather!" she said. "It puts life into me. I feel as if I could face all the managers in Christendom." Then she added: "Oh, I forgot. I told mamma I was going to do some shopping. Will you come? Now, if you hate shopping, we'll do something else."

"I don't mind it, if you'll let me wait outside," he replied, showing his white teeth again.

"No!" She spoke with decision. "We'll just take a little walk and look into the shop windows. Let's go to the book-shops. Now you won't mind that, will you?"

In looking over the books, she found, as she had suspected, that he had read almost nothing. She did not realize that she felt pleased with her own superior attainments; unconsciously she was comparing his qualities with her own. She did not care for men who were too clever, by which she meant cleverer than herself. Sometimes they frightened her. She preferred men whom she could

see through and manage. The transparency of Foster's character amused and at the same time attracted her. He wanted to buy for her some expensive books which had pleased her by their rich bindings; but she protested. "I'll tell you what I will let you do," she said. "I'll let you buy one of those nice little French dictionaries for me. See! Those little things you can slip into your pocket. I should like to have it on my table in our apartment. Mamma and I are going to have an apartment here by-and-by. So every time I look at a word in it I shall be reminded of you."

They made the purchase in the spirit of a joke, which Foster kept up with a betrayal of embarrassment in his eyes. When they left the store with it Mabel Bertram remarked: "Now, I shall have to get you to put your name in it. Perhaps you'll come up to the hotel and have luncheon with mamma and me? Then you can do it."

"I should be delighted," he said, his spirits experiencing a sudden fall. He knew he was doing wrong; he knew he ought to break away from this girl; furthermore, he knew that he ought to tell her of his engagement; but he could not think of a way of introducing the subject.

At the hotel they found Mrs. Bertram sewing, as usual. On meeting Foster she appeared frightened; but his hearty manner soon won her. She asked him about his family, and he gave her an elaborate account of his life in Madison, Wisconsin, where his widowed mother was now living with his two younger sisters. Mrs. Bertram took a good deal of satisfaction in hearing that his mother had been a great sufferer from rheumatism. She, too, had suffered from the same disease, and she had a great many stories to tell of women she had known who had been similarly afflicted. Diseases were the old lady's chief topic of conversation; and she rarely found anyone so ready to humor her as young Foster.

After luncheon Mrs. Bertram lapsed

from the conversation, and her daughter brought out her new part and read bits of it aloud to her guest. Foster expressed no surprise on hearing that actors were expected to learn their lines without knowing what the piece was about. "That's often done," he said. "The Colonel always makes a point of reading the piece to the company; but it bores most of us awfully. Jimmy Wainwright generally goes to sleep and makes the Colonel wild by snoring. For a long time I can't get the Colonel's wheezy old voice out of the lines. If he knew how to read, it wouldn't be so bad. I've heard stage-managers say it was simply a waste of time reading a piece to the actors. Dupont generally gives out the parts for one act at a time. You were lucky to get the whole of your part. If he starts in on a Monday he tells the people to be letter perfect for rehearsal the next day, and, by Jove, they generally are. They know he means business. Then he gives out the other acts, day by day. That's how he's able to get a piece up in two weeks. He's done it lots of times."

Miss Bertram looked apprehensive. "Is he as hard as that?" she said. "Then I suppose I'd better be getting down to work at this stuff. But I do wish they'd let me have the whole thing. I'm curious about it."

As they talked Foster grew confidential. He told of his interview of the day before—that is, the part of it that related to his own prospects. "And I heard from some of the boys this morning that the Colonel was likely to have a lot of trouble from Hathaway. Nellie Wilton, they say, has left Hathaway all her property. That means he owns a big interest in Fischer's theatre. Now, Hathaway and Fischer have always hated each other. Fischer considered Hathaway a hanger-on and an interferer, and he knew he was always trying to get Wilton to go to other managers. There's going to be war between 'em, and it isn't likely to do the company any good."

Miss Bertram grew thoughtful; she looked at Foster for a long time.

Then she bit the end of her finger, after a habit she had; it made a nice display of her long pink-and-white hand.

"I wish you could go with Dupont. Wouldn't that be splendid?"

"But he's got Gerald Brewer, you know."

"I know," she said, softly, continuing to bite her finger, her other fingers extended stiffly out from her hand. "But Gerald Brewer is a very uncertain quantity."

Foster smiled. "I guess Dupont will keep him straight. He knows that if he were to turn up at a rehearsal or a performance with the ghost of a jag on it would be the end of him."

"I saw him at the funeral to-day. He looked as red in the face as a boiled lobster. He'll die of apoplexy some day."

"Oh, I dare say that's just sunburn," Foster laughed. "He's been staying down at North Long Branch this Summer."

He left a few minutes later, saying that he should like to come again. He shook hands with Mrs. Bertram and said that when she went to Madison she must surely meet his mother and his sisters. The old lady blushed with pleasure. When he was gone she remarked: "He's a very nice man, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's a pleasant fellow," the girl replied, carelessly, feeling her mother's eyes fixed on her.

"I'd like to go to see him act again some night, dear. He didn't ask us, though, did he?"

Miss Bertram shrugged her shoulders. "He's no great shakes of an actor," she said, falling into the careless speech that she employed only with her mother. "But I think he could be taught," she added, pensively, as if planning the lessons. "He has a good presence," she went on, briskly. "That's about all a juvenile man needs nowadays."

"He isn't married, I suppose?" the old lady remarked, evidently pleased with the subject.

To her astonishment her daughter

grew suddenly white. "Why did you ask that?" she said, as if her breath had left her.

"Oh, I didn't know," the old lady went on, calmly. Long association with her daughter had taught her a kind of subtle dissimulation. "He didn't speak of being married. But in the theatrical profession you never can tell."

"It seems to me you are growing very suspicious, mother," the girl remarked, haughtily.

She wondered if he would come to the hotel soon, as he had promised, and she stayed at home every afternoon for several days in order not to miss him. On the fourth day, when he did not appear, she cried. She thought of writing him a note on some pretext; but she could think of none that would not be transparent. She had learned her lines, and early in the week she had reported at the theatre for rehearsal. Dupont, who was working there with the electricians, showed surprise on seeing her. "We don't begin till Thursday," he said. "Haven't you received notice? I told them to send you word. Perhaps they didn't know your address. It's on account of Brewer. He sent word up from North Long Branch that he wouldn't be ready till Thursday. Says he's sick. Booze, I guess, would be nearer the truth. But it's foolish to begin without him."

The next few days Mabel Bertram devoted chiefly to the tailor and to the dressmaker. Meanwhile, she read of Roswell Foster's success in "The Magic Lantern," which Fischer had revived with old scenery and with his new leading woman. Miss Ashmore had been a disappointment. Most of the papers, it was plain, had tried to let her down easy, for the manager's sake. But Guy Fawkes had remarked, with his usual frankness: "The poor girl had better go straight back to the woods. She'll never do for New York."

One afternoon, when Mabel Bertram returned to the hotel, exhausted, from the tailor's, she found Foster sitting with her mother. "How long have

you been here?" she cried, after giving him a greeting in which severity and cordiality were skilfully blended.

"Oh, about an hour," he replied. "But it hasn't seemed so long," he hastily added. "I've been having a fine time with your mother."

"And you've been making a hit," she said, sinking into a chair and slowly removing her gloves.

He burst into his great laugh again. "A lot that amounts to! The piece is such a frost the Colonel's going to take it off in a couple of weeks."

"And what is he going to do with Miss Ashmore?"

"That's what we are all wondering. I wish you could see her. You ought to have seen the Colonel with her at the rehearsals. You know how he twists and squirms when he's trying to tell you how he wants a bit of stage business done. Well, that woman used to give an exact copy of him, not to guy him, you know, but just because she thought that was what he wanted. It was the biggest circus I've ever seen in all my life. It used to break us all up."

"What are you going to do next?"

"God knows! The Colonel hasn't told us yet. A lot of the boys have got the blues. They think the whole business is going to smash. I'm pretty nervous myself."

"You ought to go to see Dupont," she said, with her enigmatic smile. "If he isn't on the verge of a quarrel with Brewer, then I'm very much mistaken."

The next day, at the first rehearsal of "The Game of Life," Brewer appeared, red-eyed and quarrelsome. He was fifteen minutes late; but that violation of Dupont's iron-clad rule was ignored. During the first scene he showed that he had given no study to his lines.

"You ought to be up in this scene," said Dupont, trying to keep back his anger.

"Oh, I'll be up in it all right the first night," growled the actor.

"Well, that may do in other theatres, but it won't do in my the-

atre. Do you understand that, Mr. Brewer?"

Brewer's bloodshot eyes grew suddenly larger. "I understand that you're a damned impertinent Sheeny, that's what I understand," he said, throwing his book on the stage.

"You're discharged from the company, sir."

"No, by God, I'm not discharged by you! I've discharged myself. Anyway," he added, with a surly grunt, "I've got an engagement to take my mother down to Coney Island, and I guess I don't want to have any more talk with you."

He put on his straw hat with both hands, glancing at Dupont's sharp frown and set mouth. Then he started out of the stage entrance.

Dupont turned to the group of actors in the wings. "That'll do for to-day. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

Mabel Bertram happened to be standing alone at the back of the stage. During the scene between the actor and the manager her heart had nearly stopped beating; now the blood was throbbing exultantly in her temples. Dupont stood down near the footlights; his hands were trembling slightly. No one seemed to dare to go near him. After a moment Miss Bertram stepped forward.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Dupont," she said, gently.

He looked as if she had roused him from a dream. "Well, I'm up against it," he said. "I don't know what the deuce I'm going to do. Here I am, at the beginning of the season, when all the good men are engaged, without a leading man. Of course, I know that fellow'll come around to-morrow and apologize and wipe up the stage with himself. But I never could get along with him. He's likely to go back on me on the first night, or any old time. I was a fool to take him; but they talked me into it. In this business you can't rely on anybody's judgment but your own. I feel like kicking myself all over the place."

"But you surely can get someone else," said the girl, realizing that she must move forward very slowly.

"Where? In September? There's not one in New York. Everybody that's worth anything at all was snapped up long ago. Now, just name one, if you can, my dear," concluded the manager, growing familiar in his excitement.

At another moment she would have resented his familiarity with an assumption of haughtiness; but now she observed it with a little thrill of pleasure; it was at least a point in her favor.

"Let me think. Why!" she exclaimed, as if the thought had suddenly occurred to her, "there's young Foster, of Fischer's theatre. He played *Orlando* to my *Rosalind*, you remember." Her reference to the actor as *young* Foster made him in some way seem remote from her and to place the matter on a purely commercial basis.

Dupont thought for a moment. "Yes, he'd do. He'd look the part, anyway. But Fischer's probably got him tied down."

"Of course, I don't know about that," said the girl, indifferently. "Only I've heard that they're all scared half to death down at Fischer's, for fear of being thrown out. If things are as bad as that, I don't believe you'd have any hard work in getting him. That is, if you pay him enough."

"Oh, we'll *pay* him, we'll *pay* him," the manager cried, impatiently. "Where does he live?" he asked, in a tone that seemed to indicate that he was angry with the girl. She punished him for it and at the same time she maintained her dignity by shaking her head and answering, coldly, "I don't know," and by not adding that she had his address on his visiting card at the hotel.

XVI

THAT night, when Roswell Foster entered the stage door of Fischer's theatre, he found in the letter rack

an envelope addressed to him. He dashed into his dressing-room. The comedian was smearing his face with grease-paint before the mirror. His other room-mate was out of the bill.

"Hello, Rosie!" cried the comedian, "another billy-doo? Mash letter, eh?" He saw Foster's face beam with pleasure.

"Something a good deal better. An offer, by Jove! An offer, and just in the nick of time. From Dupont, mind you. He's had a row with Brewer. Wants me to come to see him to-morrow or after the theatre to-night; after the theatre preferred. Oh, I'll be there, I'll *be* there, old chappie, this very night!"

Foster began to jump up into the air like a schoolboy.

"Now, Rosie, don't you go and get excited. Just keep your linen on. Don't jump from the frying-pan into the fire, unless you're pretty sure the fire's going to be a better place for your health."

Foster laughed. "That's all right, old man. But there's nothing for me here. You know yourself that you're afraid things are going to bust before the season's over. Dupont's got a lot of money; he's a coming man; he's progressive."

"And he's got Mabel Bertram," said the comedian, significantly. "Now, Rosie, look out. Remember that little girl up in the Ballington flats."

"Oh, she's all right. Don't you worry about her. And I'm all right too, old man. It's just a question of dollars, to put it brutally. If Dupont gives me what I want I'll go with him. If he'll assure me a hundred and fifty a week for a whole season I can get married with a clear conscience, and I guess I can persuade the little girl, too. Now, isn't that straight, Billy?"

"That's the way I like to hear you talk, my boy," said the comedian, growing serious, and thinking of the little apartment up in Harlem where the three-year-old had been fretting in the heat. "This sporting life is all

right for a while; but it don't pay in the end."

Foster sighed. "It don't pay in the beginning, Billy," he said; "and you can bet your life I'll be glad to be out of it. Ouf!"

That night, after the performance, as soon as he was dressed, Foster jumped into a cab and drove to the Comedy Theatre. He knew that he should find Dupont there. Dupont haunted the box-office; he had a large interest in the theatre, and it was said that he was the chief backer of the comic opera just closing a Summer season there. Foster met the manager at the door opening from the box-office into the narrow court that led to the stage entrance.

"I'd almost given you up," said Dupont. "Come in."

"We're out late in this piece. Those old things never know when to stop."

Dupont smiled. "We don't give 'em so much for their money nowadays," he remarked. Then they looked at each other. Dupont liked Foster's frank eyes. "Well, I want you," he said, and Foster, in his nervousness, began to hum to himself:

"I want yer, ma honey,
Yes, I want yer—"

and for several moments he had to speak haltingly through the foolish lines of the song.

"To tell the truth, I want you bad," Dupont continued.

"Well, I guess you can have me if you try hard enough."

Dupont blinked in trying to decide whether it would be safer to offer one hundred and twenty-five a week or one hundred and fifty. "How about one hundred and fifty a week?" were the words he heard fall from his lips, and then he wished he had made the other offer.

"Contract?" Foster asked, resisting the temptation to sing.

Dupont looked surprised. "Of course!" he said, with injury in his tone.

"I mean for the season."

"H'm! H'm! But with the usual two weeks' notice clause. We're sure

of a season in New York if the piece goes, as I think it will. It's a winner, old man. If it doesn't go, I've got some other things up my sleeve that I'm not talking about just now. One of 'em is a corking comedy—made a big hit in Paris not so long ago. I got all the English rights to it."

For a long time Foster was silent. Dupont waited, to humor him. From outside came the clanging of the cable cars. The girls of the comic opera company walked swiftly past the door.

"You don't happen to have a small part for a little girl, do you—maid's part, or anything like that?"

Dupont ran his hand through his hair. "Let me think! There is a little part, come to think of it. We need a girl for the third act—the scene in Central Park; comes on just for a minute. I was going to get someone from the agencies. Nothing in it, you know. Why?"

"There's a little girl I'm interested in wants to get on the stage. Never done anything." Foster tried to speak carelessly. His left arm hung limply over the chair; it felt heavy, and he kept thinking of it; the blood had apparently stopped circulating in it. "I'd like to get her a chance if I could." His voice had become dry.

Dupont smiled faintly. "Oh, I guess we can fix that up all right."

Foster managed to get the arm over his chair. "When would you want me?" he asked.

"Rehearsal to-morrow at ten o'clock sharp. We open in three weeks. Long time for me, but we're not taking any risks with the piece."

Foster rose from his seat. The blood had begun to work in the arm, but the prickling sensation was disagreeable. He moved it only with an effort. "I'll have a talk with Fischer to-morrow," he said. "I don't believe I'll have any trouble. The terms are all right."

Dupont walked up the alley to the street. "We can let you off for the rehearsal till the day after to-morrow," he said. "Perhaps that would be better."

As Foster swung up the street, vio-

lently moving his left arm, Dupont grunted: "What a fool I was to offer him a hundred and fifty. I could have landed him for a hundred and twenty-five easy. If I'd known about that girl I'd have made it a hundred."

The next morning Foster rose at eight o'clock, and after eating the light breakfast that the maid brought to his rooms, he started for Fischer's theatre. He felt buoyant and happy, as he always did in the morning; that is, when he had gone reasonably early to bed the night before. He had no difficulty in securing an audience with the manager.

"You're up early, sir," said Fischer, with a hint of derision in his tone.

"I wanted to have a talk with you," Foster replied, feeling foolish as soon as he had spoken.

Fischer lifted his eyebrows. "Sit down," he said, coldly, as if he expected something disagreeable.

"I want to offer my resignation, sir."

Fischer showed no surprise. "You might have done that by writing. That's the custom," he remarked, betraying resentment by the cold distinctness with which he emphasized his words.

"I thought perhaps it would be a little fairer if——"

Fischer waved his hand. "One way's as good as another," he said. "You want to go. Well, go, if you aren't satisfied. It's only natural that you should want to leave the ship as long as you think it's going down. But you're mistaken, sir; you're mistaken!" Fischer's hand shook. "H'm! you're the first, and I suppose there'll soon be others. But there are plenty of actors—plenty."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Sorry! Did you come here to tell me you were sorry? Why, you're getting me out of a difficulty. I don't need you. I've been thinking of giving you your notice for the last six months."

Foster flushed. He rose from his seat. "I wanted to show my appreciation of what you've done for me, Colonel."

"Yes, you're showing it," Fischer replied. "You all show it! You're all alike. You come to New York starving, and you hang around my theatre till you get an engagement, with nothing but your clothes on your backs and your bellies empty half the time. Then I take you in and I make you, and as soon as you're made, off you go to the other people across the street, who lug you around the country at the head of cheap companies like a lot of monkeys. I'm sick of you all!"

Foster stood in silence. He had the relief of knowing that the tirade was not really a reproach against himself; it was Fischer's method of expressing his bitterness against the misfortunes of years, culminating in Nellie Wilton's death. His face was pale; he felt no anger, however. He offered Fischer his hand, but the old man waved it away.

"Be off with you!" he cried. "Make all the money you can while your youth lasts. Some day you'll come back here for an engagement. But you won't get it," he concluded, quickly. "Once out of my company, out for good. That's my rule."

When Foster found himself in the cold air again he said: "Whew! I hope I sha'n't ever have to go through another scene like that. The old fool must be crazy."

As it was nearly half-past nine, Foster determined to hurry over to the hotel near by and take Mabel Bertram to the rehearsal. The day clerk said he had seen Miss Bertram go into the dining-room a few minutes before. Foster started to go in search of her, and as he entered the room he saw her rise from a table. When their eyes met he noticed that her face became suddenly luminous, and a thrill shot through him. She gave him her hand, and he just touched it lightly with his fingers. They both had an impulse to hurry away where they should not be seen.

"I thought you might come," she said, as they walked into the corridor; "that is, I hoped you might. Does it mean that you've got the engagement?"

"Yes," he replied, his voice coming thickly from his throat. "I've got it." He turned and looked into her face with glistening eyes. "Thanks to you," he said, softly, trying to smile.

The color in her cheeks deepened. "I'm so glad," she said. Then, as they neared the elevator, she added: "We'll find mamma up stairs. She isn't quite ready."

In the elevator they did not speak. He did not dare to look at her; he kept staring ahead. When they entered the apartment no one was in the big room. She walked to the table, keeping her back toward him. "Sit down," she said.

He walked behind her. "Thank you," he said. "I want——"

She leaned back slightly and lifted her head. She was breathing heavily. On an impulse he drew her toward him. Her head fell back on his shoulder. He kissed her on the lips.

She had turned white. For a moment she let her head rest on his shoulder. Then she drew it away and sank into a chair, shielding her eyes with her hand.

"You ought not to have done that," she whispered.

A moment later Mrs. Bertram entered. If she noticed that her daughter was pale, she gave no sign. The girl soon regained her color, however, and resumed her authoritative manner.

"Mr. Foster has come to take me to the rehearsal, mamma. He's a member of the company now himself. Dupont has just engaged him in place of Mr. Brewer."

The old lady was so confused that for a moment she could not speak. This situation called for more deceit than she was capable of expressing. Foster was smiling at her, and at last she succeeded in returning the smile. "That'll—that'll be very nice for Mabel," she said. Then, realizing from the look her daughter's profile flashed at her that she had blundered, she added: "I mean it's pleasant for her to have someone in the company she knows."

Foster relieved the embarrassment with his great laugh. "I don't mind saying that I'm glad *because* Mabel is in the company."

Neither the girl nor her mother showed surprise at his use of the first name. "It's time for us to go," said Miss Bertram, quietly.

On the way to the theatre they walked close together. They said little. It was as if a complete understanding had grown up between them, the understanding that expresses itself in silence.

Mabel Bertram had already begun to feel as if she owned him. She resolved to speak to him some day about those high-colored neckties that he wore; and he ought not to greet everyone he met so effusively. A man in his position ought to have more dignity. His laugh, too, was altogether too loud, though she acknowledged to herself that she liked to hear it. While she was thinking of these things Foster was struggling between the pleasure he felt at being with her and the consciousness that he was behaving like a coward and a blackguard. He had often called himself a weak fool, but he had never felt so helpless as he felt at this moment. As soon as those feelings began he ought, of course, to have told her that he was engaged; that would have put his acquaintance with her on the right basis. But he couldn't speak now; he could not, he confessed, because he dared not.

When Dupont saw Foster enter the theatre with Mabel Bertram he looked surprised. "Now that we've got you here we sha'n't let you go. You'll have to rehearse with us. You won't mind reading the part off-hand, will you?" he said.

The rehearsal lasted two hours. It was much more thorough than Foster imagined it would be. Dupont, he saw, was almost as hard a worker as Fischer. When he was about to leave the theatre Dupont called after him: "Bring the little girl down to-morrow, Foster; we'll want her."

"What little girl?" Mabel Bertram asked as they reached the street.

Foster realized that the moment had come. "The little girl I'm engaged to," he replied, in a low voice.

"Oh!" she said, softly.

They walked on at the same pace. At last she said, without looking at him: "Is that the kind of a man you are?"

He had an impulse to reply: "Yes, that's just the kind of a man I am. I'm a brute, a beast. I'm a—" He could have gone on for a long time piling reproaches on himself. What he really said was: "I know I did wrong. I hope you'll forgive me."

She made a little contemptuous sound. "Perhaps it isn't nearly as serious as you think," she said. He glanced covertly at her and saw that her eyes were filled with tears. Again he wanted to heap reproaches on himself, but he couldn't speak. She spoke first.

"Are you going to tell the little girl?" she asked, with quiet scorn.

"I hadn't thought of that," he replied, with a masculine honesty that made her smile in amusement and bitterness.

"You actors are all alike," she went on, unconsciously repeating Fischer's words, and speaking as if she were herself in some way superior to the profession. "Only I—I thought *you* might be different."

When they reached the hotel he left her at the entrance. She passed in quickly with a nod and a faint good-bye. In the apartment she met her mother. "I'm tired out; I'm going to bed. I don't want to see anyone or speak to anyone. Don't call me."

She dashed angrily into the other room and locked the door behind her.

Mrs. Bertram looked for a long time at the closed door as if in some way it might offer an explanation of the girl's mood. Then she sighed and went on sewing.

XVII

On leaving Mabel Bertram, Foster's first impulse was to go and get drunk. In this way he might forget, for a

while, at any rate, what a miserable cad he was. He would not have to act in the evening, so he would have a good twenty-four hours for a spree. Then he thought of Minnie Lane; if he got drunk she would surely find it out. She could always tell when he had been misbehaving; that is, she could always tell enough to induce him to make a clean breast of it. Then the sight of her sorrow almost broke his heart, or he fancied that it did. Besides, he ought to tell her, without letting another hour pass, that at last he had got the chance she had been waiting for. His face grew hot as he thought of how he had secured it: through Mabel Bertram's influence, though indirectly, to be sure. Oh, it was brutal! He felt strongly drawn to the bar of the Imperial Hotel. But, gritting his teeth, he pushed forward in the direction of the elevated station. He resolved to tell Minnie Lane the whole truth, no matter what the cost might be to himself. He was too bent on achieving his own martyrdom to reflect what the cost might be to her.

He found Miss Lane in her apartment. She was just preparing luncheon.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come," she said. "I've got just about enough for two—unless," she added, with a roguish glance of her blue eyes, "unless you've got an awful appetite."

"No, I'm not hungry, and I—I mustn't stay for luncheon," he added, with a prophetic feeling that he ought to prepare for an emergency.

"Why not?" she asked, lifting her eyebrows in surprise, and with the childlike expression in her face that he loved.

"Oh, because, because—well, I've just come for a minute, dear—on business."

She put down on the gas stove the teapot she had been holding in her hand.

"What is it?" she said, in a low voice, keeping her chin in the air.

"It's nothing—nothing serious."

"Tell me," she said, still speaking almost in a whisper. "What is it?"

"I've got a job for you at the Comedy Theatre, Dupont's company. I'm going as the leading man. It was all arranged last night."

She clapped her hands. Her face grew radiant. "Oh, Frank!" she cried, and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. The kiss gave him a thrill of remorse and shame. Suddenly she drew back.

But why didn't you write me last night, or wire me? I think you might have," she pouted; "and why do you take it so seriously?"

"Well—" He blushed and looked down on the floor.

"Why, Frank?" she said, gently, going up to him and taking the lapels of his coat in her hands. "Are you sorry to leave Fischer?"

"No, not that. Only—well, you know I've said all along I didn't want you to go on the stage."

She frowned and held up her hands. "Now, please, please."

"Oh, I know!" he protested; then he lifted his head. "Minnie, let's get married, will you? Let's get married to-day, right off. Will you?"

She shrank back. She looked at him, shocked, bewildered.

"Why, Frank!" she said.

"Oh, I know it seems crazy, but it's the best thing for me. I'm afraid of myself, dear. I'm a fool. I'm—"

"What are you afraid of, Frank?" she asked, gently.

"Well, I'm afraid of making a fool of myself, that's all. But if I were married to you, I wouldn't, I couldn't. I wouldn't think of anything but you, then. You're all I really care about in this world."

He sank into a seat and covered his face with his hands. She had noticed tears in his eyes. At the moment, he pitied himself; he thought of himself as the most pathetic figure in the world. She sat, too, and rested her head on the little table where she ate. She looked at him and waited for a little while. Then she said:

"What is it, Frank?"

He did not answer. When he looked up she saw that he had gained control of himself. He drew a seat

up to the table and rested his hand on her hand. She looked at him steadily.

"Tell me, Frank," she repeated.

He told her the whole story of his wrong-doing. She sat without moving. When he had finished, she drew her hand slowly from his. She rose from her seat.

"I can't take that position now," she said. She had grown slightly paler.

"I don't want you to take it. I want you to give up that sort of thing. I want you to marry me."

"Don't!" Her eyes flashed, her cheeks turned scarlet. She put her hands over her ears. They stared at each other in silence.

"I don't want to go into that life," she cried, letting her arms fall to her side. "And I don't want to marry you. I won't marry you! I'll never marry you, never, never, never! Go back to that woman. Go back to her. She is just like you. She is deceitful and horrid. I knew it. I knew it the first time I saw her at the theatre the other night. She lured you on and she made a fool of you, and you thought you'd made a fool of her. She probably knew all the time that you were engaged to me. They knew it at Fischer's, and why shouldn't she know it? Now I want you to go away," she went on, growing suddenly tearful and pleading. "Please go now. Don't stay here a minute longer. I can't bear it; I can't. Go, and don't come near me again! I don't want ever to see you or to speak to you."

He rose from his seat and took his hat from the chair where he had left it. He seemed dazed. He walked to the door, and, without looking back, he closed it softly behind him.

On his way down town he stopped for a drink at several bars. The next morning, when he appeared at rehearsal, Maurice Dupont eyed him suspiciously. His face was gray and his eyes were bloodshot. Mabel Bertram treated him with indifferent civility.

"Where's the little girl?" asked Dupont, and Foster looked surprised.

"Oh," he said, as if suddenly remem-

bering, "she—she decided not to take it."

"H'm." Dupont looked disgusted. "Too small for her," he remarked. "Nowadays, women are too lazy to learn to be actresses. They want to begin at the top."

Mabel Bertram was apparently too absorbed in studying her lines to hear this conversation.

At the close of the rehearsal she hurried out of the theatre without giving Foster a chance to meet her.

After eating luncheon Foster decided to pass the afternoon at a Turkish bath. He felt sick and miserable; he told himself again and again that he wished he were dead.

He had wrecked his life by his own folly. He would never take any interest in anything again. Marriage, that door of escape from all trouble, was closed to him. No woman would ever care for him; he would never care for another woman. Minnie Lane would soon console herself; she had plenty of women friends in New York who would tell her she was fortunate to have escaped such a worthless husband. In time she would forget about him and make for some one else the little home he had hoped to enjoy for the rest of his life. However, it couldn't be helped now. He deserved all he was getting.

That night he went to the Actors' Club, where he drank heavily, but without losing his head. The next day he looked better; the grayish pallor had given place to his usual healthy complexion. At rehearsal, when he bowed to Mabel Bertram, he thought she smiled at him; but he was not sure. He was standing alone in the corridor when she passed out.

"Walk down with me," she said, imperiously. "I want to speak to you."

He followed her as she picked her way through the narrow passage. In the street she said: "Let us go down Fifth avenue; it's so much pleasanter."

He walked a little ahead of her, keeping his face turned from hers.

"Why didn't she come?" she asked.

He had an impulse to say, "Who?" but he checked it. "She didn't want to. The engagement is broken."

"H'm!" Miss Bertram glanced at him swiftly. "Don't you think you were foolish?"

"She broke it," he replied.

She thought she understood now. The girl had been jealous of her. She wondered how much he had told. Enough, at any rate, to betray himself. Men were such fools—some men.

"You've been misbehaving, haven't you?" she asked.

He gave a short laugh. "I had to do something," he said.

"Foolish man!" she breathed, softly; then she added, in a brisk tone: "You need somebody to take care of you."

"I'm not worth being taken care of," he replied, vaguely hoping that she would say something to console him. She allowed the remark to go unchallenged, however. For a few moments they walked on in silence, keeping a considerable space between them.

When they reached the hotel, he said: "I'd like to have your good opinion, you know."

"Well, you'll have to earn it," she replied, leaving him abruptly.

After that talk they began their friendship on a new basis. She had the advantage, and she kept it. Each day after rehearsal he walked home with her; she still remained at the hotel, simply because, as she explained, she did not have time to search for an apartment. When the piece opened, she would look up a place; that is, if it made a success likely to keep them in New York all Winter. If it didn't make a success she'd be better off at the hotel. She liked the feeling, she said, of being ready to jump at any moment.

For nearly a week she dismissed him at the hotel entrance, and she refused all his invitations. Then, one day, she asked him to take luncheon, and afterward he passed a large part of his leisure with her and with her mother. He was very meek; he acted like an obedient child. He frequently

did errands for Mrs. Bertram; he even offered to go out and get some ribbons matched for the street dress the old lady was furbishing up for her daughter. When he was alone with the girl he never tried to make love to her. For hours they worked together over their rôles in the new piece. She gave him much more help than he was able to give her. She made him practice exercises to limber his voice, which, pleasant enough off the stage, sounded heavy and wooden in the theatre.

When he was alone, Foster had attacks of depression. The old sense of independence was gone. With Minnie Lane he had always had a protecting feeling; now he felt as if he were himself, in some way, being taken care of. At moments he had a wild temptation to run away, to throw up his part, and to cut out for Australia or the Klondike. He wondered what the matter was. He tried to express his misery at times by saying that he had an unsettled feeling; but he had always had that ever since he could remember. He wished vaguely that something would happen—something that would force him to begin all over again under new conditions. When he woke up in the morning, now, he loathed life; he had hardly courage enough to face the new day. He also hated to be alone; he usually stayed with the boys at the club till one or two o'clock in the morning, playing billiards, but drinking only when he felt he could not get out of it. He was one of those men who have no natural taste for drink. The enthusiasm that he occasionally expressed for fashionable drinks was intended merely to strengthen his position as a man of the world.

On the first night the piece went off in a whirl of applause. Dupont's friends filled the theatre. The next day the papers nearly all agreed that the work had no literary merit whatever, but Dupont had atoned for the poverty of his dialogue by his skill in devising sensational situations. It would probably prove to be a popular success. Two of the critics pointed out resemblances between

the chief situation and the motive of a play of Sardou's. This, however, was not the first time that Dupont had been accused of "lifting" an idea from other dramatists. Among the actors, the old comedy man made the greatest hit. He had a part slightly esteemed at rehearsal, but raised into prominence at the first performance. Mabel Bertram was mildly commended by all of the papers; Foster, however, was subjected to some severe criticisms. They both felt disappointed. They sought consolation of each other.

Toward the end of the week the piece began to run smoothly, rehearsals ended, the actors were feeling at home in their parts, the excitement behind the curtain subsided. Dupont's stage management made the performance move with almost military regularity.

Each night Foster walked home with Mabel Bertram and they took supper together at the hotel. Their friendship had become recognized in the company, though no one spoke of it to either of them.

One Saturday night, as they sat at their late meal, Miss Bertram remarked:

"I've had a longing lately to go out into the country."

"All right, let's go," Foster replied, cheerfully.

"Where could we go, I wonder? Staten Island? That isn't far. The trip on the ferry would be very pleasant at this time of year."

"And we could get something to eat at the Castleton," said Foster.

"Suppose we go to-morrow morning? Could you possibly get up as early as half-past ten?"

"Oh, I suppose so," he answered, smiling. "I'll go to bed early to-night, to make sure."

"So will I," she said, rising from the table. "Now, go straight home. Don't go to that horrid old club."

This was the first time she had urged him to keep away from the club, though she had decided to stop his going there altogether.

In the morning Foster reached the

hotel half an hour late. He apologized profusely, but Mabel Bertram only laughed.

"You've done very well," she said. "We have the whole day before us; and such a lovely Autumn day!" she added, looking out into the street bathed in sunshine.

On the ferry they stood outside watching the ships and enjoying the salt air. Once her hand touched his, and for a few moments she let him clasp her fingers tightly. Then she drew her hand away. For the first time since that awful day when he had had his last talk with Minnie Lane, he felt happy. His eyes sparkled, his cheeks were flushed, his laugh rang out in the cold air. Again she felt toward him as she had felt on that first meeting with him in Fifth avenue, and again she felt afraid of herself. But when they reached Staten Island and took the train for Richmond, where Foster said they'd better start for their long walk, she put aside all thought of fear.

As they walked Foster began to tell her stories of his home in the West. She herself grew strangely silent. When they had gone a couple of miles she said she felt tired and wanted to rest. They sat on a bench on the lawn of a neat little white cottage where no one was living.

"It's nice here, isn't it?" she said, looking around. "I think I could be quite happy in a place like this."

He glanced nervously down the road. No one was in sight. "I could be happy in such a place, too," he said, "if I had you with me."

She blushed and said nothing.

"I think I could be a pretty decent sort of a fellow, too." She did not answer, and he said, softly: "Mabel, I know you think I'm a good deal of a blackguard and a fool. I suppose I am. But if you'll take me as I am——"

She leaned toward him, and he started to put his arm about her shoulder. Then they saw someone walking toward them in the distance, and they both straightened up.

"Mabel," he said, abruptly, "will

you marry me? Will you marry me now?"

"Now?" she gasped.

"Yes, to-day. Right here, in this place. Why not? Why should we wait? I want to get married, and I want you. It's foolish to wait. There's no reason——"

"But what would they think in the company?"

"I don't care what they'd think. It's none of their business, anyway."

She shook her head. "It would be a mistake," she said. "It would hurt us both if it were known. We'd have to keep it secret," she concluded, weakly.

"Well, no matter, I'm willing to keep it secret, if you insist. But I don't see why——"

"Yes, I do insist. It might not hurt you, but it would hurt me. Dupont would be furious."

"Dupont!" Foster repeated, contemptuously.

They rose and started to walk back toward Richmond. Mabel Bertram was trembling. "No, no. It would be a mistake," she said, as if answering her own thoughts.

"We can find a clergyman down at Richmond. There must be a lot of them there. It will all be over in a minute, and then we'll belong to each other."

She looked at him and grew pale. She took his arm and held it tightly.

"If there is a clergyman at the first place we go to, I'll marry you," she said, "but if there isn't, we mustn't; we'll go home," she concluded, as if she felt there would be an escape from herself at home.

He laughed joyously. "All right," he said.

When they reached Richmond they found a carriage at the station. Then they sought out the nearest Episcopal clergyman, who happened to be at dinner. He sent word that he would come down in a few minutes. He showed no surprise when their errand was explained to him, and no interest when they said they were both actors. He called his housekeeper and the maid to act as witnesses. Within twenty minutes after their entrance into the house they were man and wife. When the ceremony was over, the bride fainted. She revived quickly, however, and walked with her husband to the carriage. As they drove to the Castleton to take what Foster called their wedding-breakfast, she grew tearful. "I wonder how mother will take it?" she said.

"Oh, she'll be all right," Foster replied. "Why, we're the best of friends already. I'll telephone her."

The bride shuddered. "No, no; I'll tell her myself this afternoon." Then she added: "It's going to be dreadfully hard keeping it secret."



NO ROOM FOR ARGUMENT

SHE—You need not think you are first in my affections.

JACK HUGHARD (*tightening his hold*)—That may be, but you must admit that I am a pretty close second.



ADMIRABLE SIMULATION

BESSIE—Did you see that man making love to me a few minutes ago?

CARRIE—Yes. There's good material for an actor in him.

A WOMAN OF THE WORLD

By Ethel M. Kelley

DEMURELY wise and graciously endowed,
So shrewdly sweet, so conscious of the crowd,
So fragrantly a woman, yet I doubt
Lest she has crushed the spark maternal out.

The hair's glad gold, the sweet, art-aided glance
Of eyes bewitching blue, and all by chance
The glimpsing of a half-neglected heart,
Where tendernesses bloom and tear-dews start—

The eager fingers snatching at the gleam
Of world-ways flashing on the social stream,
Glinting her sweet, sophisticated hands,
So skilled in giving what the world demands—

The gay young worldliness that riots there
Upon her upturned face, the shadows where
The years will pencil crows' feet, and the hair
That Time will powder with the dust of care—

And deep within her heart the garden spot,
Where impulse runs to seed, or blooms forgot,
With half-sown seedlings blighted by neglect
And brilliant blossoms planted for effect—

So stands she, poised and posing, draining life
From out the lotus cup. To-day's fair wife,
And soon to-morrow's widow. Even so,
The shadows gather when the sun drops low.

Disciple of the Seeming, world-imbued,
Less foeman of the sinful than the crude;
Gowned with instinctive grace and aptly shod,
Praying to Mammon, while she kneels to God.

O weakling World! O sinful Flesh! and thou,
O Devil damned! stand forth and answer how
Ye three shall face your God, on that last day
When she shall turn her shamed face away?

THE SMART SET

How will ye scorn your handiwork and sneer
 At that poor, crouching shape, that bravely here,
 In purple and fine linen, danced the dance
 And trod the measure of the piper Chance!

What will God say to her that day when she
 Looks down on His remotest star, to see
 The radiant earth, on which her life was spent,
 A pin point in the outer firmament?

How will she tremble in the vast Unknown,
 Her naked soul before the still, white throne!
 The gracious condescension of the dance—
 How will it serve in meeting God's great glance?



POINTS OF VIEW

“THE worst of women can forgive,” remarked the Sage; “the best cannot forget.”

Said the Fool: “There are but two kinds of women: those to whom men can make love—and the others.”

“Say, rather,” replied the Cynic, “there are those who take men and make them fools, and those who find them fools ready-made.”

“Nay,” said the Old Man, “but some women love wisely—and some only love well.”

“Yes,” said the Lover; “for though every woman is of all kinds, yet the name of each is Love.”

And though Love may forgive, it cannot forget.

For the curse of knowledge is Memory.

But forgetfulness is the death of Love.

Wherefore Love is born in innocence and joy, . . . but it lives and is perfected in knowledge and pain.

R. W. ST. HILL.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF HAPPINESS

BECAUSE the dandelion's hair must turn to gray,
 Dissolve into eternity and float away,
 Shall we not love it for its gold to-day?

Because all human love must in the end grow cold,
 Must pass and give its place to loves of newer gold,
 Shall we not drain of joy the hours we hold?

ELISABETH R. FINLEY.

LADY MÉCHANTE

BEING CERTAIN PRECIOUS PHASES IN THE CAREER OF A NAUGHTY NONPAREILLE—
A FARCE

By Gelett Burgess

AT the age of three-and-twenty, Mrs. Florizelle Gaillarde found, among her charms and tokens, item: a flamboyant youth which had at last got its second wind, in the rather splendid pace she had set for herself, and, to this, a nimble wit sharpened to a wire edge by alternate poverty and wealth; also a footing in the *haut monde* won by finesse, the attainment of which scarce repaid her for the struggle. She had, moreover, a sense of the Relative Importance of Things by which she was able to classify her desires and to lay a tiny curly finger upon her nearest wish. First, then, she touched Romance, for, despite her variations of social altitude, neither Time nor Fortune had yet brought to her door an Interesting Man.

While her husband had lived, life had gone, in a way, merrily enough, for his profession (he was a swell "cracksman" of acknowledged ability) had savored their nights with the truths that are stranger than fiction; but, even then, she was by no means satisfied. No matter how picturesque a man's trade may be, if he is not of the fibre of fancy, he grows dulled, sooner or later, to the beautiful opportunities of his vocation, and inevitably he gets to taking his emotions cavalierly. Leopold had done his poor best, in the earlier years of their married life, to satisfy his wife's idealism, but he was internally cursed with the fatal quality of "meaning well." Though, after the honeymoon, he had given himself up to her empire, she

had never really succeeded in scanning any poetical quality into the bald prose of his profession. Such things must come intuitively, and Leopold was a hopeless Uitlander to the fate-marked aristocracy of Pure Romance.

He was a clever burglar, as burglars go, but he had more of the artisan than the artist in him. His fingers were facile, but his fancy faint. He dabbled in wee sensations; he was quick enough at a hint, but slow to see for himself, at a *clin d'œil*, what risks were raw, what ripe, what rotten.

After his death, Florizelle, who, in her salad days, before the *mésalliance*, had been a regularly apprenticed *débutante* in the service of Madame Qui-Vive, was enabled, thanks to her departed husband's industry, to take up again her card case and lorgnette, brougham and liveries, and enter London society through the Gate of Affluence as a sort of journeyman *mondaine*, to practice the mechanics of high life amenities.

The assumption of the old-new routine, however, entailed many onerous punctilios that chafed her more mature enthusiasm. The receptions to which she was invited were dull, the dinners homicidal. She found that her associates played at the game of Society, now, with the stolidity of whist fiends competing for points and prizes, rather than with any true sporting instinct. In short, she had returned to her world to find one dimension gone. Her sphere had become a mere circle, with longitude

and latitude, but without depths of possibility.

She might have escaped, it is true, by staying away from such mummeries had she not unwittingly fascinated a dozen or so frock-coats, who, before she was aware of the invasion, came a-vaulting the walls of her Mayfair street privacy and trampled the garden of her domestic life. They would not come on her "days," but persisted in dropping into her seclusion to bore her one by one. It was useless to forbid them entrance; they lay in wait for her at every corner. The worst of it all was, that what agile wits there were among them were frightened away by this siege, and Florizelle was encompassed by a retinue of slow-minded retainers whom it was impossible to discourage. Her back yard was littered with the bouquets that she flung with impetuous adjectives from her morning-room windows, and her maids grew affluent on ancillary arles. Mrs. Gaillarde was forced to live a large portion of her time in her brougham in order to escape the insistence of her satellites.

Despite all this, the gaiety of the town held the charming widow captive, for she was city-bred and disdained the unspiced flavor of rural joys. She could no more deny herself the stimulus of gas-lit frivolity than she could refuse her lips the invisible aid of vermeil. She was a creature who craved exotic intellectual sensations. Still, as she was clever and imaginative, she could not help seeing all about her the avenues of Indiscretion which led to tiny twilight paradises, little carousels of fashion, into which her comrades strayed, hand in hand, questing adventure; but these were not for her. She was for a marvel; the caverns of her joy must be, not stucco, but crystal and ruby.

She thought time and again of flinging away her fortune and making for the purlieus again, but the memory of her former society checked her; she did not like second-story men, she found forgers and counterfeiters, cracksmen and confidence sharps, all

one-sided and vulgar. There were, on the contrary, many men in the world polite whom she would welcome into her acquaintance, if they could be induced to come, but they would not come. In short, she longed to pick her own friends as men used, and to be free to go and come at will among them, without card or caution.

But she lacked the precise impelling motive till, at a dinner given by Madame Qui-Vive, she found herself taken in to table by a man whose face seemed piquantly suggestive. She tried to pick up, in her memory, his name from the mumble that had served as her introduction, but except that it began or ended with an "R," she found nothing to prompt her. She read his name on the card beside his plate. It was "Mr. Guy Bounder."

She said, then, as he began his oysters with the wrong fork, "Mr. Bounder, I seem to recall your face, as of one I have known, but I cannot put you quite in your place in that rogues' gallery of my mind; something in your *gaucherie*, too, cries out for recognition; a certain slipshod habit of your attire, an unpleasant though familiar expression in your eyes, proclaim you an old friend, but I am at a loss to class you. If you have this stolen property of mine, I pray you return me my recognition."

"I thank you a thousand times for your insults," said Mr. Bounder, dropping his serviette, and planting a kiss upon Mrs. Gaillarde's carelessly dropped hand as he stooped to pick up the linen before the waiter could intervene. "I thank you, since it proves you really are what I had suspected; you are my Lady Méchante!"

Mrs. Gaillarde nearly swooned. "But your name!" she cried, in a tone that brought twenty eyes jumping toward them, hurdling the lighted candlesticks to throw themselves mercilessly upon the pair.

"I call her Emily, only Emily, and she has just commenced to talk!" he replied, with rare presence of mind. "Only the other day she toddled in, and said—" But by this time the

inquisitors had turned their attention from the two, and he resumed, with more adulation. "Surely you remember 'Mustard,' the hero of the Belgrave Square job? I remember your own congratulations one evening at the Burglars' Ball! And so poor Leopold is dead? I suppose you keep on with the business?"

"What, in heaven's name, do you mean?" said Lady Méchante. Then, turning to the human being on her left, she murmured, "No, I haven't been to the theatre for two days! 'The Atom' was so clever that it absolutely exhausted me. . . . Yes, you must come and see me! I am always at home on the fifth Wednesday in February, from eleven to quarter-to-twelve. . . . No, really?" And then, to Mr. Bounder she added, "Is it possible that there is a profession that my sex has not adventured? Are there, then, female burglars?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Mr. Bounder, "but I thought that one of your Ladyship's attainments and cleverness would have profited by your husband's tutelage."

"I am no Lady," said Mrs. Gaillarde. "I have dropped the sobriquet. Here are ladies around you; do you confound me with such wax-work? But seriously, you have, for once, put an idea into my head. No, no; not that there was not plenty of room," she added; "but that *you* should have done it!"

"I could find you the necessary tools," said Mr. Bounder. "I have myself a silver-mounted set that I would willingly place at your service." The love-light had stolen into his face.

"It is not that—it is not even the lack of familiarity with the old-time 'fences,'" she said, casting down her eyes. "I have not lost my proficiency. See here!" and, as he looked, she abstracted the gold watch from her neighbor's pocket, while she feigned to reach for the celery.

"Ah, yes; I remember that trick well," said Mr. Bounder, as he accepted the little token of old friendship. "I once waltzed with you!"

"Do not mention it," the widow replied, summoning a blush. "It was such a little thing to do for a friend. I am sure you profited by it in the long run. But this is the point: I am bored. Frankly, dull as you are, you are a Haroun-al-Raschid compared with these half-witted objects here. You have—unwittingly, I acknowledge—pointed out to me an avenue of escape. You still love me?"

"Madly," murmured Mr. Bounder.

"Then accept your reward! Kiss me!" said Mrs. Gaillarde, slightly inclining her head.

"What ho! Before all these people?" cried Bounder.

"You are a poor fool," said the little widow. "One does not offer such a favor twice. You have lost that one forever. But you still have the watch, and it will stand you ten bob at least. Let that suffice. As for me, I have found my career. The world shall once more hear of Lady Méchante!" And, though the *entrée* had just been served, she rose and left the table.

In this wise did Mrs. Florizelle make her dignified exit from Society.

II

It was not long before Mrs. Florizelle Gaillarde's prestige had flooded the crepuscular sub-world of extraritualistic functions; for, among that Submerged Tenth, her skill and daring, combined with the compulsion of her ardent nature and lambent temperament, would have insured her leadership even if she had not had the handicap of Leopold's connection with the profession. She had no need, then, to begin with Shoreditch or the Newington Causeway, and, though she was known and feared at the "Elephant and Castle," her fame jumped boldly into the secret councils of Soho. In the empire of Crime and Adventure women have larger rights and lesser privileges, so she threw off the insistence of chivalry; she was no longer over-sexed, she had become an Economic Factor, taking her place as an equal.

London, indeed, soon began to hear of Lady Méchante, as she had predicted. She fitted modern methods to modern needs, and, not content with harassing the better known districts of Society, she became an explorer, and laid her tribute upon new territories. Her ablest accomplice in this work was Guy Bounder, who, though a child compared with her, in the field of invention, was familiar with the machinery of the profession, having kept in touch with affairs while she was rusting in the aristocracy.

But, though it is not of these industries that our tale is concerned, let us mention some of her more important departures. First among these came her innovations in the scandal market; she replaced the private detective in important divorce proceedings, and became a purveyor of sensation to the more lurid journals. Her skill in breaking and entering gave her marvelous proficiency and usefulness to her clients, but by reason of her intimate familiarity with the classes, she was enabled to select and obtain what ordinary thieves would hardly have noticed. She did, it is true, pick up a rare first edition here and a particularly attractive etching there, but this was mere by-play.

Prominent in her mind, too, was always the possibility of a literary career when she should settle down to a demure old age. She began to keep a journal, descriptions of famous persons she had met, hints of place and environment. These sketches, to be sure, had to be done by half light, but she linked herself to the Impressionists and the Symbolistic School, and found ample material for such nuances. From these hints of Memoir and Reminiscence her fancy flew to more picturesque heights. Now she visited the habitations of the literati, and "lifted" manuscript in bulk. Before long her private writing-room was stored with all that was best of the literature, not of to-day, but of to-morrow, carefully classified and indexed, gauged, too, for publication at the right moment, so as to

forestall charges of plagiarism. For a time she dallied with these tasks herself, but the work became too strenuous, and a corps of writers was installed in the little house on Mayfair street, and nearly every day saw a book of poems, essays, a novel, biography or what-not sent to the publisher, to appear shortly with the name of Florizelle Gaillarde upon the back. What she could not use was disposed of at absurd prices to the tertiary authors, and the Bureau of Plagiarism thrived and increased. Reputation was, in this way, divided more equally; like Robin Hood, she took only from those who had fame to spare, and conferred it upon the poor but deserving.

Yet, in spite of these activities, and too many more to describe, she lacked Adventure of proper quality to satisfy her multiplex necessities. Guy Bounder and her lesser associates she saw as through the wrong end of the opera glass—small, sharply set in a wonder-world of insignificant emotions, delicately colored, but cold and unreal. After all, they were no more worth while than her five o'clock frock-coats. They were indurated; the crust of their professionalism could be broken into by no pang of novelty, nor by the stabs with which the mad-hearted little Florizelle sought to pierce their calm.

Still, she knew that there were men worth while knowing, and if they attended neither the ordeals of Belgravia nor the occult processes in Soho, she must find them out at home. What use was her marvelous capacity if she must be balked of such glorious booty as the acquaintance with an Entertaining Man? A lively appetite for originality grew into a hunger unbearable, and from that to an intellectual starvation. Such was her London. It has been many another's.

She was lunching at Dieudonné's one day, saucing her duck with such reflections, when a gentleman entered who probed her curiosity to the quick. Here, she thought, is one of the three interesting men in London. The unknown seated himself near her table

and proceeded to give evidences of taste and originality. His judgment of the *menu* was of a hair-trigger accuracy and swiftness; his order was sharp without being hurried, and his treatment of the waiter and the waiter's treatment of him exhibited patently the importance of the guest, both to the community and to himself. Lady Méchante could not help contrasting such individuality with Guy Bounder's nonentical rule-of-thumb *savoir faire*. Guy, too, had a rabbit lip, with the chin of a lizard; he had a rush of teeth to the mouth, and yet she spent her time with him and his commonplaces when she might have been collecting such patrons as this genius for her *clientèle*. Surely she had lost much time!

She gave the word to her groom, then, upon leaving, and an hour later received the information that the man was a Mr. Saul Edam, living at No. 67 Knightsbridge, and that he carried on business as an East India warehouseman in the city. The last item was a shock to her, yet the attraction of his personality drew her, and she persuaded herself of his worth by many feminine excuses. That very night, indeed, she set out; she was not one to linger long while her egg cooled.

"I will do him the honor of robbing him with my own hands," she said to herself, "and, incidentally, I will find out what manner of man it is who has hands like that and who wears a brown that is at least six weeks in advance of the mode!"

Lady Méchante, like Love, laughed at locksmiths, but, unlike Love, she was by no means blind. Yet, for the first time in her life, she bungled. She entered and threaded her way through the house with dexterity, giving a quick glance here and there as to the importance or value of the mental furnishings of the place. Try as she might, however, there was little trace of any secret that could be made worth her time or trouble. The man's life was absurdly blameless, she estimated—there was hardly ten shillings' worth of blackmail from cellar

to garret. It was, after all, a house for the rank and file of sneak-thieves, surely no place for a lady. Still, she dared not go till she had taken a look through the secretary in the library.

A few old love letters, yes; and she smiled at their uncompromising character. The man's life must, she thought, have been singularly dull. It would be a charity to write a note and leave it here for him, perhaps, and she was feeling for a pen when a noise behind her turned her head. Mr. Edam had entered, and his face wore an unaccustomed look of surprise. It was evident that he was unused to entertaining ladies in his rooms; he was even ungallant enough to exhibit his displeasure.

"What, in heaven's name, does this mean, madam? And by what right are you ransacking my desk at this hour of the night?"

"Pray don't disturb yourself; I have just finished," said Lady Méchante, drawing on her gloves. "I was just picking up a few trifles, but I assure you that I have found nothing of value. I won't trouble you longer—really, I must be moving. But that old scarab seal there, yes, I might take that. Thank you, good-night!" She turned as she passed him: "Poor, dear man! You *are* bored, aren't you? Now, I know of a lady who is so good at that sort of thing. Really, she does it very well indeed!"

"Who and what are you?" Mr. Edam insisted. "Am I to take you for a common burglar? How did you enter my house?"

"*Pat-à-tie, pat-à-ta!*" mocked Florizelle. "In a moment I shall be annoyed, and then I shall never, *never* come again! I came in by the window—we modern Englishwomen are agile. A burglar, yes—a *common* burglar, no! My word, sir, do I look it?" And she ran up to the mirror.

"You are young for this business, my dear," said Edam, who could not help but be charmed by the lady's manners. "But think what this means—at your age, too!" Lady Méchante blew him a kiss. "You a

thief! God help me! I can hardly believe my eyes!"

"Oh, I beg you not to inflict your Nonconformist morality upon me at this hour," she answered. "What, then, is your honesty—you, a city merchant? You buy, it is true, but you sell for more than you gave, cheating your victim out of one or two hundred per cent. What more do I? I take, here and there, what I can find, and I sell it again at an insignificant advance; think of the risks, too, should I fall in with those who are not *gentlemen*!" She gave him a searching glance, which embarrassed him visibly. "No, no, I believe you honorable, Mr. Edam; I do not accuse you. You believe in competition. You know that honesty is an outworn policy in your business. It has as little place in mine. I know, too, that you play the stock market; you are, in short, a gambler. Well, then, you prefer chance, and I, skill. Yet I had fancied you might understand—that you might appreciate the compliment I paid you. Never mind. You may yet regret your treatment of Lady Méchante. And now, sir, though I am far from angry, there is nothing I desire so much as a way to the door. I have a shattered ideal to nurse. It is very late. Yes, the tips of my fingers only. Well, perhaps we may yet be friends. Good-night!" She ran down stairs lightly and was into her brougham before Saul Edam could pursue.

Disastrous as was this sentimental experiment, she could not help confessing, whimsically, to Guy Bounder, who heard the tale with a lowering brow. "Oh, I say!" he interrupted. "You'd better steer clear of Johnnies like that, you know! It was all right when you were in the swim, but business is business, now, and I don't like it." The vital point of the episode had, as usual, utterly failed him, and Florizelle sighed.

Yet she was only twenty-three, youth was still bubbling in the glass of life, and she coaxed her illusion back to convalescence. From many pleasing hints and anecdotes the name

of Sir Seton Maldivers, Q.C., became known to her as an advocate of unusual astuteness. In all her life she had not met a barrister. A few phrases of his lodged in her mind. He had a way with men and children. He was a woman-hater, to boot, and this alone was enough to pay for the trip to St. John's Wood. Up she went, then, and in she got by way of a parlor casement. She hoped he would be at home, for she was minded to steal a glimpse of his profile. There was an odor of good tobacco in the house as she tripped up stairs. She laid hand upon the door whence it proceeded most plainly, and walked in boldly. She was bound, this time, to put the matter to the touch without preliminary skirmish.

Sir Seton Maldivers was reading, but he rose hurriedly as she entered. "I beg pardon," he exclaimed; "really, I had not heard you announced; you know, you quite surprised me!"

"It is close upon three in the morning," Florizelle returned, "and I had not thought it worth while to disturb the servants."

"But I don't quite understand—" began the baronet.

"I shall try to make it easier for you," said the lady. "Fancy, for the instant, that you are back in the days of Romance. Your book, yes, as I thought—Anthony Hope—that simplifies matters. Let us proceed, then, *en règle*. I come in the guise of a highwayman, by burglarious entry; I ask you to stand and deliver. Your ideas, then, or your life! I need not say I am desperate. Thank your stars that I am also beautiful. You are indeed fortunate, and this relief should be a pleasure. But I am in haste. What ideas, thoughts, fancies, quips, jests, conceits, inventions, judgments, theories, speculations, notions, opinions, beliefs, sentiments, or what not you have, you must make over, for I must fill my head before morning breaks. I prefer a marketable commodity, surely, yet I shall not stick for commerce. Speak, then, if you dare answer a hot-headed woman! I am in no mood to wait while

you consult the encyclopedia! Understand, my dear sir, if you please, you are being bullied. I am prepared to use force!"

"My dear Miss Rigmarole," cried the barrister, "I pray that you attempt to calm yourself. I will ring for attendance; surely you are distraught! Just a minute, and my maid——"

The little lady whipped out a revolver and presented it at his head. "Must I be more explicit?" she said. "Do you imagine that because I can gossip I shall not face death if necessary? I have not touched your property, as yet, but pray do not found too high a conception of my scruples upon that restraint. I am of the criminal class, I assure you, and though I have neither a low, receding forehead nor the unsymmetrical *stigmata* of the mattoid, yet I am bad enough, in a way, as the world judges. Are you a man, then, or a mouse?"

"Are you a woman or a devil?" retorted the barrister.

Lady Méchante dropped the end of her weapon. "The retort courteous," she mused. "He may do."

In an instant she was disembarassed of the pistol, and found herself violently seated upon a lounge. The tête-à-tête had become intense.

"By your eye, you are mad!" said Sir Seton, "and I shall take immediate steps for your apprehension."

The lady forced a laugh. "Oh, no; never mind. My apprehension is satisfactory to me." She opened her chatelaine and displayed several instruments, the use of which is unmistakably illegal. "Here; I may convince you, at least, of my sanity."

"Heavens! How came you to this pitch of corruption?" said the other.

"Mere enthusiasm," asserted the lady, lightly. "Much as you have attained your own eminence in the law. I mean, however, I have been misinformed as to your conversational brilliancy. Yet I object to your substantive. Corruption is an unpleasant term; it is horribly suggestive of physical decay."

"Yet you acknowledge that you have chosen a career of vice," the baronet said, still feeling her with his two eyes. "Have you no conscience, then, madam, that you so prostitute your intellect in such an infamous pursuit?"

"Enough of such Philistinism. I am sick of such conventional minded obloquy! You dare speak to me of conscience, of infamous pursuits—you, who trade in professional hypocrisy? You, sir, are a criminal advocate; it is your business to defend or to prosecute, as your retainer bids; to shut your eyes to the verities and attempt to close others' vision. What are you but a licensed liar? It is the same to you whether you are keeping a criminal from his just deserts or stretching the neck of an innocent father whose little ones shall cast his blood upon your head! *Sac-à-papier!* My trade is open and holy beside yours. I pit my craft against organized society, and take all chances. Even you know me by name and by fame. I am Lady Méchante, the heroine of ten thousand actionable works of art and genius!"

With that she turned and left him. At the door she stopped and turned to him, as an actress pauses at the wings before the customary stage exit. "I shall not come again," she said; "I shall not come again!" Her veil was tied, her gloves buttoned; she ducked her head and threw herself out of the doorway, leaving the baronet wiping his eyeglasses nervously.

"My word, you surprise me," said Guy Bounder, when he heard of the exploit. "But I say, you know, you don't want to go and make gyne of a toff like Sir Seton, blimy, or I'm fair to split! Why, he's the larst charnst, he is. Some day we'll be needing him, maybe. What's the use of being so cocky? Why, Sir Seton is by way of being the best criminal advocate in the city, and we're like to need him any time, s'help me! My word, it'll take a bit of doing to get *you* off, Florrie, when *you're* pulled!" Guy's fortunes had fallen to a low ebb, and

his manners usually kept them company.

Such remonstrances, however, failed to dampen Mrs. Gaillarde's enthusiasm. Nor, indeed, did a series of unsuccessful attempts at nocturnal adventure during the ensuing season. She flitted here and there, breaking and entering, and now and again, as her moods grew more reckless, she hazarded interviews with her patrons. She confined her attentions to gentlemen whose birth and repute promised the greatest intellectual satisfaction, and she became a polite register of the town's bachelordom and *jeunesse dorée*. Many a youth awakened at two in the morning to find a beautiful woman, masked, but attired in tune with the latest cry, sitting in his favorite armchair, smoking a perfumed cigarette, waiting for him to compose his wits for the colloquy. She ranged wide with such as were fit opponents, touching religion, conduct, art, fashion and sport, working delicately along the lines of least resistance.

How few there were, however, worth her while! From Mayfair to St. John's Wood, from St. James's to Chelsea and Bayswater, she followed every clue, and the legend of Lady Méchante arose and flew from club to club and from pub to pub. Last night she had visited young Barnegat, the Australian millionaire, at his rooms in Duke street; last week she had fascinated Lord George Cobhouse, and he had chased her half-way across Kensington Gardens in his pajamas before her grooms had caught him and beaten him blue. To-night wagers had been laid on Blankinsop, the American plunger, and men walked the streets about Cavendish Square, hoping for a sight of the green brougham. Gentlemen of fashion began to leave their house doors unlocked and their watches prominently displayed to net this butterfly. Her *mots* were retailed at afternoon functions; the women of the innermost circles conspired together to put a stop to the innovator. The man who had last received Lady

Méchante was the popular hero until the next was chosen; and before long it came to pass that there were false witnesses enough for a dozen duels. No one, as yet, had seen her face; no one had touched her lips. With all her prominence in the arena of gossip, scandal had not wounded her; there were too many men-about-town infatuated with Lady Méchante to make that safe.

III

THERE was a time when Guy Bounder had kept up a dummy residence in Jermyn street and built from that *pied-à-terre* a flimsy fabric of fashionable prestige. It was at Madame Qui-Vive's, indeed, that Mrs. Gaillarde first encountered him after her re-entrance into Society, but Mr. Bounder's presence there would hardly bear investigation. There are paid, as well as paying guests, at the functions of the *beau monde*. That had been Guy Bounder's unique appearance at the Hotel Qui-Vive.

For a while the magnificent successes of Lady Méchante enabled her partner to keep up the Jermyn street apartments upon a still more solid basis than before, and Guy found his professional connections with Society by day gave him many advantages, which he was not slow to use by night. The partnership flourished for a while, but my Lady Méchante's fantastic taste for originality and the spicery of genius led her steadily away from those industries Guy himself considered most remunerative. The weekly accountings grew smaller and smaller, and, not to put too fine a point to his sufferings, four months later found Guy Bounder installed permanently in rooms on the Queen's Road, Chelsea, opposite the Royal Hospital, a seedy, plucked thing of questionable antecedents and suspicious habits. He at his perihelion was no Adonis, but in this phase of disrespectability his weakness betrayed itself in face, form and gesture as he sat at his tiny window and

thought of the recidivation of his associate.

At the rare intervals when he was permitted to see Mrs. Gaillarde, he was, of course, unable to give voice to his reproaches. Florizelle was too gay and irresponsible for that; she had but to crook a little finger and he melted into a canine submission and sentimentality. She twittered and laughed away his disappointment, and yet he lacked the stamina to break with her directly—to plunge alone into manly enterprises of his own and reinstate himself in the profession and at the secret councils of the Fraternity. Lady Méchante had long since begun to neglect the conspiracies of Soho, and was in open revolt, playing her own part in the town as a free lance, and reporting to no central authority, claiming no vote in the tribunal. Guy feared for her. She was already suspected, but he had defended her as well as his standing permitted; he had no suspicion yet of any cardinal lapse from the primitive morality of the clique. If such a mouse can love, he loved Florizelle, and love can accomplish marvels. His passion was in a fair way soon to make a man of him. A drop of jealousy in that sweet solution would at any moment turn it to a mordant acid.

He was sitting indolently at his window one day, watching the daily pavement quarrel, whose actors were usually recruited from Paradise Alley across the street, when a green brougham came into the road from Tite street and drew up at the curb. From this alighted something in veil and lace and fashionable frippery—woman or angel, he guessed—and, as the crowd made way for her, she pushed open the iron gate of the tiny garden and rapped at the knocker with a gusto that rattled the windows. It was not two minutes before a flutter outside his door told him the honor was to be his, and, after a summons to the door, Mrs. Gaillarde entered to him, borne up from below on a wave of curiosity visible and audible from his landlady, her father, daughter and

the slavey who whispered and peeped on the second landing. Mr. Bounder welcomed his caller with surprise, stuffed a wad of paper into the key-hole and showed the lady a seat.

"Oh, Guy!" she commenced, casting a lively eye over the dingy chamber, "what a dear, funny little room!"

"It's all o' that," said Guy, "at eight-and-six a week in advance, and sixpence a scuttle for coals. It's beastly funny, ain't it? Want to tyke a room here?"

"Poor old Guy," the visitor murmured. "Are you strapped again, boy?"

"Strapped ain't wot it is—I'm bust, Florry! I've winked me jerry, I've popped me toppe, and I've hung up me waistcoats, and I've done in every last flash at Uncle Jacob's. I ain't got chalk fer a 'arf-pint o' bitter at the Six Bells. I'm a vag, I am."

"My word!" cried the little lady, drawing out her handkerchief, a lace bit, a two-guinea affair from New Bond street, and wiping a tear from her lid. "Aren't you doing any jobs now?"

"I ain't got the nerve without you, Florry, blimy if I have! I ain't bust a 'ouse since you give me the sneak. Strike me blue if I won't be carryin' the flag in another week! I've got down to w'istlin' up 'ansoms fer the toffs and cab-duckin', I have. An' you flashin' abart in brooms, s'help me! Christmas! I feel as mean as a dyin' duck in a thunderstorm, Florry. But I ain't tried to touch you, old girl, 'ave I? Not for a half-crown, I ain't. I'll do time first!"

"Poor old Guy! Think of the good jobs we've been in together! How I *have* neglected you! But that's all right, Guy; I've been busy myself."

"Busy at wot, I'd like to arst? I've heard o' Lady Meshant's doin's abart town, Florry, an' I ain't winked. I kin trust you fer a pal, old girl, cos I know yer stryde, but wot's the little gyme? Ain't it time to let me in?"

"Never mind my affairs in the past," replied Mrs. Gaillarde, "but I've a 'pony' for you now, for the

luck's turned. Yes, a 'monkey,' if you like, and you fit. See here: how much are you in for with your land-lady?"

Bounder took out a roll of greasy sheets from an empty tobacco jar. "I don't do much eatin'," he mumbled. "I get sevenpence-ha'penny breakfasts, wick means tea like paynt, an' a 'orrid egg with two slabs o' toast to it, and mangy butter. There's fourteen bob four a week fer six weeks, is two pun six, an' I ain't give the slavey a tanner sint I come. Oh, I'm a high Willy, I am!"

"Here, take this for the present," said Lady Méchante, handing over a pair of ten-pound notes. "There's more to come when you've got your clothes out of pawn. I hope you haven't forgotten how to speak English, though, Guy; you're no use to me on the 'other side of the water.' I don't do much business in Battersea or the New Cut nowadays."

"My dear Mrs. Gaillarde," protested Mr. Bounder, with emphasis, "you will find that when you leave cards like this with me, Guy Forsythe Bounder, Esquire, is always at home. I can learn more English from a Bank of England note in four minutes than from all the pawntickets on the Old King's Road, I assure you. I am by way of being a creature of environment. Contact with the purlieus of Paradise Alley gilds one, in a way, with a manner. I take on color. From this moment I am all West End. When I wear varnished boots I promise you that everything else shall correspond. I shall tub daily while this munificence lasts, and I forswear Shag for Egyptian Deities forthwith."

"Here, take one," cried Mrs. Gaillarde, merrily, producing an enameled cigarette case. "I confess your room reeks. Now you are rehabilitated, you surely must notice it. Matches?" she added, and she shook the box as she passed it. "And now to business, for I see my carriage is creating an excitement in the neighborhood, and there are goings and comings on the stair. You can still do my bid-

ding without unnecessary curiosity as to my motives?"

"Madam, I am your champion again," Mr. Bounder protested. "In our profession the days of chivalry have never died."

"Let us call it nights of chivalry, to be more precise. I have need of you."

"Otherwise you would not be here," said Bounder, sadly.

"No, no; not that exactly," she replied. "But that is beside the mark. You have mentioned my green brougham. I am sincerely sorry to find it has become so conspicuous. Yet I may as well use the advertisement. I propose to use it, then, henceforth as a decoy; that is, if you will be my duck." And Mrs. Gaillarde leaned toward him semi-affectionately.

Such demonstrations always made Mr. Bounder nervous. Like most men, he preferred to make his own advances, and grew embarrassed when forced to play up to such trumps. There was, indeed, more difficulty in Lady Méchante's leniency than in her reserve, so her demeanor sobered him. He rose awkwardly.

"What do you mean?" he stammered.

Mrs. Gaillarde laughed wickedly, knowing her hold over him was so sure. "This, if I must put it into words of one syllable," she said. "I propose to ransack the town while you play ducks and drakes with these silly men. You take my brougham and my mask and entertain my friends. I assure you I have a wide acquaintance, and your entries will be easy. Meanwhile, I have my part to play, which need not concern you."

"What shall I say?" cried Mr. Bounder, pitifully. "I've heard the talk on the Row, and I know you've been up to some game with the Johnnies; but, my word! I don't see myself sitting in men's chambers in an evening gown, prattling Ascot and Goodwood at three in the morning! I'm out for the oof, Florry. Business is business. I don't complain, mind you. I know you're straight, as

I said, and I don't pretend to fathom your tricks. If I didn't trust you, you know I have only to put them on to you at Soho Square."

"*Sac-à-papier!*" cried Mrs. Gailarde. "Do I understand you to threaten me? Do you know I am Lady Méchante? I could undo the Burglars' Central Committee in ten minutes. Man, I am in with the Privy Council, to the last Lord! I needn't mention the Prince—you may have heard."

"That's all gammon, Florry; but I said I was sure of you. Still, business is business, too," he repeated.

"Well, you won't complain. See here: that chatelaine I found on the dressing-table of—well, never mind whom. It was laid there for me. It's a Queen Anne, too. Charlie Northbrooke—you know Charley? Dear boy! It's a pity he hasn't brains! Why, he leaves ten-pound notes about, with poems on the back. No trick, either, for they cash all right. Why, you stupid, you have only to take a Gladstone bag and pick the swag everywhere you go. You'll find they're fond of me. I've been offered twenty guineas to drop my mask. The town's *wild* over me! You can make a thousand a week!"

"Why do you leave it, then?" asked the astounded Bounder.

"Never mind! I've a better graft than that. Will you do it or not, that's the question?"

"I will, if it's like that," said Guy. "When do I commence?"

"To-night. Come to No. 45, Fitzroy street, and jump into the carriage as it goes past at one o'clock. You'll find all the information in the right-hand pocket by the clock, and mind, be sharp. Do as much as you can. There are several expecting me; and don't drop the mask, not for anything they offer. Here—you'll find a sergeant of police at the corner of Brook street and Grosvenor Square. I owe him five pounds. He's a dear! Your costume? Oh, yes; I'll leave all the necessary things in the carriage, and you can change while you're riding."

"Fancy!" interjected Bounder. "I

don't mind a bit of acting, for I'm by way of being a proper 'serio,' but Lord! I can't train down to *your* figure!" and he looked at her with complimentary glances.

"You'll have to lace; it must be done, my dear fellow, and the cape will help. But study your part well, mind. There's Sir Cyril Heatherby—talk polo to him, and say you've seen him in the Park with Dolly Chatterton. He'll protest. Then Lord Suddenleigh; he's engaged to the Honorable Maude Evelyn Poke, and you can twit him with that. Leave him the note you'll find in the left-hand pocket of the brougham, and borrow all you can. Look out sharp for Colonel Wetmore; he'll jolly well chase you down stairs if you don't have your revolver ready. The Marquis of Newbury will probably offer you jewelry, but insist on cash."

"Do they know you're coming?"

"Lord, no; that is, not just when. I've no doubt they've all paid the bobbies to look the other way. No, I never make engagements, it's too risky. I just drop in casually."

"Well, you *have* got a calling list, Florry; my word! I'll do what I can, but I'd like to know what you're up to!"

"You'll be busy enough without wondering about that! Well, I must be off. So long, old boy! do it well!" She opened the door, blew him a kiss, and tripped down stairs. The front door slammed, the carriage door snapped and the green brougham was off toward the West End.

Quickly as she vanished, however, the landlady was up stairs for her rent before the horses felt the whip. Bounder had already begun to shave, and was practicing the airs and graces of a gentleman.

"H'm, h'm," murmured Mrs. Gailarde to herself, as the houses flew by, "I *thought* he was in a way to make me trouble. I think I looked him up just in time. He'll talk about me at the Committee Rooms in Soho, will he? Well, I've got rid of that. He'll be too busy to watch me for a while, I give my word. I'll settle him, just

as sure as my name is Lady Méchante, and that's no joke, either. And now, and now, for Mortimer Stencill. Ye gods, a whole Winter gone and no one yet worth while! London is the dulllest place on earth. If he is as much a 'card' as the others, heaven help me, for the devil won't! Yet what an actor he is! He ought to be *the* one at last! Heigho, I'm bored to death. Tim's my last chance; if he fails me, I'll join the Salvation Army and be a lieutenant of the Kennington Devil Drivers!"

IV

MORTIMER STENCIL was an American, which fact may or may not have been the foundation of Lady Méchante's hopes. He was good looking, even for a *matinée* idol, having the sort of face that men admire without contempt, and not of that conventional, shaved cast which proclaims the profession. Travel had tuned him; he did not jar or discord in any society. He had wit, the dry humor of his nationality, and not a little of the romantic conservatism of the American in London. He lived, during his London seasons, in a little street off Westbourne Grove, no matter precisely where, save that it was as isolated as is possible in that locality. It was called Something Crescent, a street on a curve, boasting front gardens elevated above the pavement.

It was a "typical London" evening, as tourists would call it, when Mrs. Gaillarde drove past the warehouses of Whiteley, the "Universal Provider," wondering whether, even in that famous magazine, she could find her quest—an interesting man. The fog had obliterated perspective as a coat of whitewash destroys the scrawls and shadows of a cellar wall. The horse padded on, doubtfully, coming to rude stops occasionally as the driver attempted to force him up over a curb or into a hydrant, and Lady Méchante was buffeted to and fro inconsiderately. She had changed her brougham for a private hansom and her evening gown for a white shirt

and swallowtail. An Inverness cape was over all. Upon her coiled hair sat a mohair opera hat, securely pinned. Between her lips was a white cigarette, burning reluctantly, for the lady was a bit nervous.

Yet there was a smile on the face of this beautiful Nonpareille and her mind was alert and ware. When she reached the house of her new client she sprang from the seat, and the cab passed on without stopping. She ran up the wooden steps, passed quickly around the house, and paused at a window in the rear. In a moment her mask was adjusted and she had begun to force the sash. That done, she slid over the sill, navigated the floor without disaster and passed into the hall.

Above, it seemed to her that she heard the sound of voices, so she dropped to a seat on the stair to listen and wait till the house grew quiet. Someone was speaking in a mellow, modulated tone; it was not the tune of any English inflection, for the sentences ended with a falling accent. No Briton, she knew, could finish a sentence without the customary "isn't it?" with the characteristic circumflex. No Briton, either, could make a statement without interlarding the phrases with "what I mean to say is *this*." And yet there was not the nasal drawl she had been wont to call American. It was evidently the voice of a gentleman. After a while the monologue ceased, and waiting a half-hour, she stole up to the upper landing.

In the upper hall a thin pencil of light shot from a single keyhole, and she bowed her head to peep in, with a muttered apology. Within the chamber a gentleman was standing with his back to her, in front of a mirror. He was swathed in a dressing gown or bath robe of Japanese flowered *crêpe* and was brushing his hair vigorously with two brushes without handles. Below, a cuckoo clock set up a distressing double hiccough.

Mrs. Gaillarde turned the handle, but the door was locked; then she cried "Mortimer!" through the keyhole, and waited. The occupant of

the room answered directly, and threw open the door. His aplomb certified to his gentility, for he bowed politely, and then threw up his hands in the American fashion, in token of submission to the "hold-up."

"My watch and what money I have you will find on the bureau," he said. (Mrs. Gaillarde wondered what 'bureau' meant.) "I beg you to make no more noise than is conveniently necessary. These incidents, I suppose, will happen, even in London, and, as long as you do not shoot at my toes, to force me to dance, I can only admire your enterprise." He waved her toward the mirror, and then, seeing no weapon in her hand, let his arms drop, and waited for his cue.

Mrs. Gaillarde, accustomed as she was to cordial receptions in her wanderings, could not but wonder at the man's courtesy. She reflected, too, that she was, for the first time, in masculine attire, and the astonishment grew to a marvel. She dropped into a chair, therefore, smiling behind her mask. "You take me, then, for a burglar?" she murmured.

"I had sincerely hoped so!" Mr. Stencill explained. "To my mind, it is the most picturesque of professions. I have long desired to become acquainted with the fraternity. I beg you," he added, "do not disappoint me. Your informal entrance has, you will admit, given me grounds for my suspicion."

"It is a nasty trade," cried the newcomer. "I loathe it; and yet, when you learn my real condition, what will you think?"

"Come, come," replied the actor. "Why, my dear fellow, when I think of the shame and deceptions of my own profession, the simulation of vices, the affectation of virtues, the eternal disguise of another's thoughts, speech and costume, the absolute impossibility of any spontaneous act—your own craft strikes me as being noble in comparison. You may at least be yourself, you do not have to wear the second-hand robes of Hypocrisy!"

"Yet I am a criminal and an out-

cast," his visitor insisted. How often had she not used his very words; how strange it seemed to hear his defense! More than one swift, silent, sympathetic glance shot from the eye-holes of her visor. How she delighted in his sophistries! How often had she not prated thus!

"A criminal, yes! And what am I? While I do murder, the pit applauds; but what benefit do I get from my imitated crimes? You go gloriously at large. You cry 'Open Sesame,' and the doors that are closed to me give you a sensational entry. Who receives an Adelphi player? My God! man, it is I who am branded, not you? I, who am surrounded by Romance, can never taste it myself. I perish of thirst, surrounded by the sea! I have not even the tinsel glamor of the stage to feed my hunger for the picturesque. I am behind the scenes—I see the back of painted flats, faces heckled with rouge, mock properties and empty wine glasses. *You* have the run of the town!"

"I would not deceive you," answered the lady, affected potently; "think so, if you can. Romance? Pish! Not an Englishman in London can so much as spell the word. Yet you seem to have ideals. I have looked for you long, Mr. Stencill! You are one of three millions. I speak timidly at such a visitation; you may think I am but a timid burglar, even at three-and-twenty, but—I should like to *know* you."

"Is this possible?" cried Mr. Stencill. "You do me too much honor, sir!"

"I have not yet confessed," Mrs. Gaillarde answered. "I have still to test you. You Americans are so absurdly chivalrous that you must compensate somehow in your attitude toward women. Yes, I am a woman! Hate me now, despise me, and my long quest is over, and I shall return to respectability!" So saying, in a fervor of suspense she threw off her mask and fell to weeping.

Stencill's whole appearance changed. "Heavens!" he cried, as he saw her young, fresh face, lighted by imagina-

tion and sentiment, very beautiful. Then, "Hush!" and he sprang to the door and closed it. "My wife!" he cried, in a low, piercing voice.

The words stabbed her, but it was not so much that name as the tone in which it was uttered that sent a shaft of despair into the heart of Florizelle Gaillarde. He was an American, and therefore of the Middle Ages of sentiment. He was in love with his wife. The accent of his emotion proved it. She looked up at him, a little haggardly. She must rob him, and that quickly, or her reputation would be gone with him. She drew out her pistol with a forced braggadocio and pointed it tremblingly at his head. She saw on the moment that at this demonstration his conscience was relieved.

"I shall not disturb Mrs. Stencill, and, now that I know who is in the house, I need trouble you no longer with my fictions. Forgive me my ruse!" She stepped to the chiffonier and shoveled the trinkets listlessly into a pocket of her Inverness. His interest in her had been extinguished the moment he discovered her sex. Married, and still in love! It was ridiculous, effeminate, anachronistic, yet the pose fascinated her. She must have time to think it over.

Stencill's keen interest in the waywardness of her business exhibited an obvious struggle with his fear of her discovery. His voice sank into a hushed double *piano* as he said, "You interest me, madam, beyond words. Had you been the man you seemed, I would have liked nothing better than to know you; we could be much to each other. And, too, I am very curious; I have ideas of my own that might—I speak in all modesty—assist you. But I confess I am in an uncomfortable position. You understand—"

"Perfectly!" said Mrs. Gaillarde, freezingly.

"Still," he continued, weakening under her scorn, "under other circumstances—you might call upon my wife, perhaps."

"Sir!" cried Florizelle, with a fine histrionic scorn.

"Ah, well, of course!" he assented. "I remember one of my pet uncle's earliest maxims: 'Never introduce female contemporaries.' But may I not ask your name?"

For the first time in her illicit career Florizelle hesitated. She even blushed. "I am she who has been known as Lady Méchante," she murmured, casting down her eyes.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the other, almost aloud. Not quite. The burden of a presence in a proximate apartment still cowed him. He sat down on his bed and put his head in his hands.

The gesture was opportune. When he looked up again his visitor had vanished. He threw open the door and began to whistle loudly, but out of tune, an insistently apologetic melody.

V

USED as she was to calling Guy Bounder a "cake," Mrs. Gaillarde could not deny his gifts, and she had not picked him for a stool-pigeon without a good opinion of his powers of mimicry. He was not half-bad as an actor, his form was plastic, his voice capable of much distortion, and he could even imitate the floating *diminuendo* of Lady Méchante's quicksilver laughter. He had her mannerisms by heart, as when she sat down with a gyratory curl of her skirt he had caught the *pat-à-tie*, *pat-à-ta* tattoo of her fingers, the tilt of her chin, and her wavelike step.

So it was that his first attempts at impersonation succeeded miraculously, and his studies to maintain her distinguished prestige did her no little credit. Her stock went up all over town, as she was found to be more than ever amenable to complimentary benefices. Lord Suddenleigh's generosity induced Guy to visit at Belgrave Square more often, perhaps, than Mrs. Gaillarde would have approved had Mrs. Gaillarde known, but Guy gathered other valuables besides "tenners" and "twenties," and Florry acquired an amount of scandal

that might some time be of use with the Honorable Maude Evelyn. Bounder found an easy method of erasing Charley Northbrooke's poems from the back of his banknotes, and he had less fear of the Marquis of Newbury's jewels than did his principal. Of Colonel Wetmore, more later. He was by far the most untractable, but as he was disgustingly wealthy, poor Guy could not keep away, as shall be seen in the sequel.

He went and came, then, for a time in blissful content, too busily employed to notice Lady Méchante's delinquency. No offers would induce his favor even to the extent of a kiss. It goes without saying that he did not allow the mask to be dropped for an instant.

All this while he trusted Florry as a dog trusts his master, but, once on the path of wonder, there was but a single destination. Lady Méchante, in her proper person, was heard of no more, and he began to suspect her disappearance. The spark traveled slowly, but at last it came upon some inflammable fibres of sensibility, when suspicion flamed up, burning with a fire colored with presentiment. Had Florry gone wrong? Enough manhood was melted down into a lump of resolve to give his fears solidity, and he set himself to hunt the lady down and prove her.

It was not long before he found his opportunity. He dropped in at the Adelphi one night, and there, with her eyes glued to the stage, with her lace handkerchief ready for an explosion of emotion, sat Mrs. Gaillarde. Behind the footlights the actors ranted and sawed the air, and for some time Guy could not distinguish the particular attraction to his lively and affected patron. As the scene changed, my Lady Méchante grew *distracte*, but the entrance of Mr. Mortimer Stencill, spouting a bombastic soliloquy, drew her from her reverie, and her opera glasses flew up. This was enough for Bounder, and he did not notice the interested occupant of the opposite box, a lady of sprightly figure, dressed in the outrageous good

taste that becomes the American woman. She seemed a good-natured observer of the ingenuous occupation of her *vis-à-vis*, and laughed merrily in a manner that to the pit seemed inconsequent.

A word at the box-office gave Guy Bounder information of the star's abode, and two hours later, after a game of draughts at the Café Royal, he hailed a cab and set off for Something Crescent, Westbourne Grove. The equipage was dismissed at the Royal Oak, and Guy set out on foot into the fastnesses of Bayswater. The house was found without difficulty, and he smiled to see a front upper story room alight.

He was a "second-story" man of old, and the veranda columns were no trick. From the top of the portico he had a clear view into the room through a slit between the curtains, and, by a rare chance, the window was slightly open. There, in very fact, was Stencill, ensconced in an easy-chair, smoking a perfecto, conversing with someone in evening dress, someone whose back was turned. This person still wore a hat, and was not smoking, nor was the glass propinquous upon the table filled. These things were disagreeably suspicious.

"My dear fellow," Stencill was saying, "if you insist upon my calling you that, I can't put you out, you know, but I assure you I am trepid. You have seen enough of me to know I am unique. I am a man who can love but once. A platonic affection? If you like, and if you still believe in such follies, well enough. You are still young and enthusiastic. I have paid for that farce in my day, and if you are willing to take the consequences, I can't help saying that I like you!"

"And you the only interesting man in London!" said the other, while Guy gasped at the *timbre* of the voice which uttered this familiar sentiment. "What hope is left for me? For the first time in my life I have made a fool of myself. To think of Lady Méchante, *Lady Méchante* forcing her attentions on a man!" She

turned her profile; it was indeed she, and Guy felt the portico sway under him.

"Florry, Florry here, for pleasure!" he muttered. "Calling on this play-actor, *free*? My Gawd!"

"I have had a strange life," she went on, "cursed by the continuous desire for human interest. Men may make their own friends, aye, and keep them with no fear. We women are bound to take what the gods send us. The good old days are gone by," she continued, "when 'the males compete and the females select.' I have vibrated between the limits of Society and Crime. I have ranged high and low; I tried even marriage! I have found you too late. What is left? More dinners at Madame Qui-Vive's? I was no more born for those ceremonials than for the conspiracies of Soho Square. I have had my fling, and I have lost. *Mon Dieu!* How I have fallen, to pursue you like this!"

"There are others; I am by no means the only man with an imagination in the world," Stencill protested, mildly. "The way is open for you to explore; there, too, lies America."

"I am fastidious," she responded. "I want all or nothing—that is, all my own way. Tell me, do you believe in Affinities?" she asked.

"Affinities!" and Mortimer Stencill hid his smile. "Why, my dear, I am thirty-three! Go seek a chameleon. You may find Affinities to throw at the birds! My dear child, heaven forgive me, but I believe you are an American!"

Guy Bounder heard no more. His soul was sick with this sentimentality. Hardly had he left the house, however, before Mrs. Stencill opened the door where the two were conversing, and entered with a smile. Mortimer started guiltily. As for Lady Méchante, she had foregone the possibility of embarrassment long ago.

"Tim," said the hostess of this somewhat dizzy group, "pray present me!" She did not wait, however, but went gaily up to Florizelle with a great show of frankness. Lady Méchante rose and met her. The two

kissed theatrically. Mortimer Stencill looked on puzzled. Then his face brightened. "Well," said Florizelle, "it's up to you, Mrs. Stencill!" She had not been calling upon the American twice a week without imbibing a few new metaphors.

"Well," began Roberta Stencill, "you see, my dear, it's no sort of use. I knew it wouldn't be, in the beginning, but I did so want dear old Tim to have a good time. He's so romantic that it seemed a shame to have him all to myself, and yet he's utterly incapable of an actual affair. His sentiment is all theoretical. You are a creature of action—I can see that, my dear—and I knew you'd never believe it if I told you how partial Tim was. He's done you good, and you've done him good. So now I don't see why we can't all three have a good time together. Bless you, you needn't call! You may burgle us to your heart's content; the more scandal the better in our business. But the immediate fact is that there's been a man outside your window, listening. I thought you'd like to know. It seemed to me that he fainted away and fell off the roof of the portico. Anyway, he's gone, and he left this behind." She pointed to a small but exquisitely tooled silver lantern. It bore a monogram—"G. B."

"Guy Bounder!" cried Lady Méchante. "He was here, and he listened?"

"With interest," said Roberta Stencill. "As much as mine," she added, naïvely.

"It *was* a psychological moment!" said Mortimer.

"My dear," said Lady Méchante, "it was climacteric."

VI

THREE days after this the "All Smoke and No Fire" company finished its engagement at the Adelphi, and the actors and actresses of the troupe had their farewell dinner at Kettner's. Mr. Stencill, true to the Quixotic chivalry of his continent,

had dined there with his wife. He was a monomaniac on the subject of connubial faith. Mrs. Stencill shared his views, moreover, and the two kept up the national pose with childlike confidence.

They returned from this banquet, on foot, at two in the morning, fascinated at the secret charms of the deserted city, now vacant as a beach at low tide. Now and again the jingling note of a passing hansom sang from a distant square, like the cry of a belated October mosquito. Hardly a light was visible save that row of lamps that divides the traffic and guides the eastward vehicles down into the constellation of islands at the Piccadilly archipelago. The Circus was a polar sea of white electric light as they crossed, and above, the stars sprang for a few hours from their daily eclipse as the curtain of smoke and vapor thinned. Piccadilly was theirs alone, as far as the eye could reach. The very houses seemed to sleep.

They took the path across Hyde Park, along the Serpentine, and out the Victoria Gate, talking ever of Lady Méchante; of the absurd incongruity of a lady with a temperament in this supercivilized town; of her tantalizing efforts to find a man of her mettle. She was a sport, a hybrid, exotic to the anæmic, hypercultivated hothouse. Peril was in store for her.

They crossed toward Sussex Square, and there, as a carriage flashed past, gently trotting round the ring, Roberta pressed the arm of her husband.

"See, the green brougham!" she cried. "I saw it from the Park; it has been round three times since I first looked. It must be waiting for Lady Méchante. Let's wait and see her."

As she spoke the carriage came again into view, traveling like a star around its orbit, hugging the curb by the iron palings. The two walked slowly, circling in an opposite direction round the Square.

They had hardly completed the cir-

cuit, however, when, from the front door of a house in Stanhope street, directly opposite, burst an extraordinary apparition. The door was suddenly flung open with violence, displaying a square of brilliant light in the façade of the residence. Silhouetted against this background was a confused mass—human beings intermingled in a preposterous skirmish, from which arms were flung and legs gesticulated. The *mêlée* was over in a moment, the door was slammed with a jar, locking the house in darkness, while a frenzied figure flung down the steps.

Whether man or woman could not be determined at first, though the grotesque form bore a skirt and the remnants of a hat waved from a wig atop the disheveled head. It tottered into the light of a lamp-post, staggered, and then made at a sharp run for the brougham swinging into sight. The upper half of the creature proclaimed manhood, yet the gown hung at his belt and the hat was cast loose upon the pavement. He was almost bare from the waist up, and round his bleeding breast circled the remnants of a pair of stays and a few fripperies of lace and ribbon. He ran like a madman, an unholy spectacle, through the stillness of the night, swearing horribly in strange coster's oaths. He sprang upon the brougham and wrenched at the door.

Then from the window a pretty head appeared, and a ripple of quicksilver laughter rang out. Lady Méchante had come again by her own. It was a ridiculous colloquy. The lady tittered to die at his plight, but kept the door of the carriage locked, while the driver fingered his whip apprehensively.

"Oh, you guy, Guy!" she screamed. "I told you to look sharp for the mask, and be careful of Colonel Wetmore. You'll eavesdrop on me, on Lady Méchante, will you? You'll report my case in Soho, my dear fellow, will you? Why couldn't you attend to your own affairs, Bounder? I'm shocked. You're a sight for the gods—not for a lady—my friend. Get to the Park, you ine-

briated tatterdemalion," and she rang the electric bell for the driver.

Bounder broke out into oaths, fuming furious. He put his fist through the carriage window, and the broken glass tinkled merrily against the cobbles. He dodged back then, but not quick enough to escape the lash of the coachman's whip, which landed on his bare back, curling him up in agony. They were off at a hand gallop forthwith, brougham, driver and the fair passenger inside whirling past Mr. and Mrs. Stencill, gaping on the pavement. Guy stood, an inhuman scarecrow, in all his outrageous circumstance, fair in the middle of the street, and continued his profanity, gesturing the moon. He had dropped his h's with his waist and corsage, and his talk was the talk of a bargee the next morning of a mad Bank Holiday.

Mortimer Stencill drew his wife away, though there was not a word audible that a lady should understand, and left the victim to his apostrophe. But at the next turning the indecent nightmare shot by them, sprinting like a demon, a marvel of preposterous *deshabillé*, an outrage to sound and sight, dripping *lingerie* and buttons, as he galloped to the top of the street and collided with a policeman at the turning. As the couple went out of sight, officer and maniac were locked in each other's arms, and a shrill whistle was being echoed from several directions at once.

The actor and his spouse were by this time too weak to talk, and they went home, borne by gasps and concussions of inane hysteria. It was too late to sleep, for they were to take the 2.15 train at Victoria for Southampton, and for several hours the husband and wife sat in excited conversation on the freaks and madcap perfervor of my Lady Méchante. That her rope was short they could not but believe. The capture of Bounder would inevitably compromise her, and the hue-and-cry would surely set the fashionable districts of London by the ears. She was doubtless betrayed at Soho Square long before this, and

Fate must soon overtake her who had mocked high and low.

"Tim," Mrs. Stencill said, finally, "we must rescue her. It would be a shame to let such a spirit languish here, even were she to escape from the clutches of the law. What an American she would make! What a wife for some nice man!"

"What a wife, indeed!" mused Mortimer. "A man with nerve and sentiment might tame her, if he lived."

"Nonsense! You won't understand. What is her vivacity but the reaction from the canons of this effete community? In the West her eccentricity would never be noticed. And give her the sight of real men and women living sane and untrammelled lives, I am sure she would be a new woman. She has balked and kicked over the traces because she felt the restraint, but once show her liberty and she will be tractable enough. She's a thousand times too good for London."

"She's too good to be true, I'm afraid. Have you any amiable snake charmer or lion tamer in mind, my dear little match-maker?" he added.

"Tim, don't jolly me, for I'm in earnest," she protested. "As to my plans, you shall see. The first and immediate thing is to find her and get her away." She rose and put on her hat.

Mortimer Stencill followed her, as was his wont, being an ideal American husband. There was no denying her in this mood. It was now nearly five o'clock. They happened on a cab at their very door, and drove at a well-tipped pace in the direction of Bloomsbury.

"Are you going to break in?" he asked, as they passed out of Holborn.

Mrs. Stencill made a mouth. "If necessary," she said.

But it was not necessary. The front door of No. 31, Fitzroy street was seen, as they drew up, to stand ajar.

"We must hurry," cried the wife. "I am afraid we are too late."

They ran up the steps and in unhin-

dered. But as they reached the second landing a jaded, hispid French maid confronted them.

"Eet ees ze poleece?" she asked. "I am ready; but zere ees nozzing here!" There was, indeed, nothing in Lady Méchante's boudoir but the wreck of a luxuriant apartment, still odorous with violets. Every stick of furniture had been removed—hurriedly, it might seem, by the evidence of the scratches and rags of tapestry on the walls. In my lady's chamber a few gowns still remained; the maid had evidently been interrupted in her work.

Mrs. Stencill then explained that she was a friend of the vanished mistress, and anxious to help her away.

"Ah, zat ees diffairente," said Suzette. "But *vraiment*, I do not know! My lady left one hour ago, een a hurry, yes! She deed not say to where I should send ze things, but I deed not veesh ze poleece to get everyzing. So I have removed them. Perhaps I shall hear,

perhaps not. *Que voulez-vous que je fasse?*"

There was no time to wait. The gay bird had flown, and Mr. and Mrs. Stencill returned sadly to their house in Something Crescent, in bare time to get their own impedimenta ready for the train. They made the trip down to Southampton quietly, in a first-class compartment. The only other occupant was a little old lady with gray hair and a deep mourning veil. It seemed she, too, was bound for the American steamer, for she was still with them when the tender put off. But they did not see her again for several days, owing to Mrs. Stencill's *mal de mer*.

It was when Roberta crawled down to the dining-room for dinner on the fourth day out, trembling but victorious, that she found, seated opposite her at the table, pink of cheek, curly of hair, bright of eye, and with an inimitable expression of some devil turned saint—who but my Lady Méchante!



THE SECRET

DO you know what moves the tides,
As they swing from low to high?
'Tis the love, love, love
Of the moon within the sky.
Oh, they follow where she guides,
Do the faithful-hearted tides!

Do you know what woos the earth
Out of Winter back to Spring?
'Tis the love, love, love
Of the sun, that mighty king.
Oh, the rapture that has birth
In the kiss of sun and earth!

Do you know what makes sweet songs
Ring for me through all earth's strife?
'Tis the love, love, love
That you bring into my life.
Oh, the glory of the songs
In the heart where love belongs!

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

THE GHOST FLOWERS

I SAT alone in the midnight silence,
 And thought of the lovely ladies dead.
 "Where, oh, where are your souls and bodies,
 Merry maids that I loved?" I said.

I leaned my lips to a bunch of blossoms
 Loosely laid in a dainty jar,
 And lo! a murmur of mingled voices
 Cried to me softly, "Here we are!"

The red rose set in the centre whispered:
 "List! I've a secret sweet to tell;
 Oh, kiss me close on each crimson petal,
 For I am the mouth of Muriel."

The fragile fern-leaves, light and airy,
 Swaying under the softest breath,
 Filled the room with a ghostly laughter—
 "We are the curls of Elizabeth!"

The bluebells chimed: "We're the eyes of Alice;"
 "I am Barbara's brow," was the snowdrop's note;
 The white narcissus smiled, "Behold me!
 I am Cecilia's dimpled throat!"

Then spake the trembling, waxen lily,
 The lily of all I loved the best;
 And these were the words it shyly murmured:
 "I sprang from the beauty of Mary's breast."

Filled with wonder, I leaned me lower,
 Eager to catch the lightest word,
 But all of the blossoms fell on silence,
 And only a cricket's chirp I heard.

Oh, was it truth, or was I dreaming,
 Sitting alone in the ghostly hours?
 Did the merry maidens, dead and buried,
 Return to me in the whispering flowers?

SUSIE M. BEST.



A PECULIAR thing about wealth is that when you own too much of it it owns you.

ON THE FEAST OF THE SEVEN SORROWS

By M. A. Davis

ONLY a few flickering shafts of light pierced the darkness of the storm clouds, which were slowly, stealthily creeping up the valley to enshroud the convent of Our Lady on the hill. The tall tapers on the high altar trembled in the gusts of wind that came in through the chapel windows, to where knelt the nuns in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the close of the *tantum ergo* of the Benediction on the feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.

The heads of even the littlest pupils were bowed in the awe they felt rather than understood.

In a tiny room on the topmost floor, illuminated only by fitful flashes of lightning, knelt a woman with red hair, before a cheap crucifix. Between the sobs that shook her frame she murmured, "Sacred Heart, hear me. Our Lady of the Seven Dolors, save me—save me!"

Twice she rose and made the sign of the cross with the holy water from the china font that was suspended by a lavender ribbon from a tack, whose garish brass head seemed incongruous with its sombre surroundings, like the peroxide head of some harlot among virgins.

Beneath a cheaply mounted photograph of Bouguereau's "Mother of Sorrows" stood a table strewn with books and papers. Across an open volume of Father Faber's "At the Foot of the Cross" lay a letter. "Come to me," it read. "Three long, dreary years have I waited to say this. The courts have at last pronounced the decree of divorce, and

I am free to speak the words that have so long palpitated in my heart. Do not, little one, let your religious convictions concerning divorce stand between us now. I know you are against a marriage not blessed by one of your priests, but what do priests——?"

A bit of tear-stained note paper hid the rest. On it was written, in a shaking feminine hand: "I have struggled, God and the saints know, to be resigned to the life of one of this sisterhood, but the love in my heart has conquered. I will not offend our holy mother, the Church, by the hypocrisy of a marriage not sanctioned. I will come to you, but not as your wife——"

As the last notes of the hymn, "O Sacrament, We Thee Adore," echoed and reëchoed along the empty corridors, the storm, as if held in check by the devotions of the faithful, broke in all its fury over the convent. The wind shook the casements and alternately roared and moaned for entrance. Then the lightning, like a band of furious fiends, danced from the cross-crowned spire of the convent to the ground, seeming to stop but once—at the window of the red-haired woman.

The door opened to admit a pious nun in the habit of the order. Blessing herself with water from the font that hung by the worldly looking tack, she said, softly, addressing herself to the kneeling figure of the woman: "The Reverend Mother of Novices is ready to receive you in the Novitiate parlor, if, dear child, you are convinced that our good Lord has

found you worthy to entrust you with the gift of a vocation for our holy order."

The red-haired woman made no reply. Sister Mary Dyonicius shook her gently by the shoulder, but the

Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows had heard and answered her prayer. And pressed to the wounds of the suffering Christ on the crucifix were the dead lips of the kneeling red-haired woman.



SHE'S IN THE SMART SET NOW

MY handsome niece, Lucindy, who writes her name Lucine,
 Comes up from town to country when woods an' fields are green;
 An' though she is so stylish, she still to me is dear—
 She used to live at Crosscut, but three straight miles from here.
 Her father's made four fortunes, an' gives her one to spend—
 I have to sit an' wonder just what will be the end.
 She's got a host of sweethearts, who low before her bow—
 She doesn't care to marry, she's in the Smart Set now.

Lucindy needs a husband who will not waste her gold.
 Her nearest friend's a countess, with wealth almost untold.
 She knows the Vanderastors, an' with them goes to dine.
 Twice she has been through Europe, an' must have made a shine.
 She plays both golf an' tennis, an' sings like any bird!
 Her dress is silk an' satin, made up both plain an' shirred.
 She looks just like a princess, is quite as fine, I vow!
 Of course, some folks will envy—she's in the Smart Set now.

Her diamonds number dozens, an' cost a mint, they say;
 She has a dread of burglars, an' keeps them hid away.
 Her brickyard is splendid!—such rare things from afar!
 The house with them is littered, an' they would fill a car!
 She's got an automobile, that goes just like a streak—
 I once rode in it with her, an' must have looked a freak!
 She used to drive old Tortoise, that's quiet as a cow,
 But that I shouldn't mention; she's in the Smart Set now.

"Lucine" down in the city, Lucindy on the farm,
 An' I have my opinion which one has greatest charm.
 The first's all fuss an' feathers, the other, plain good sense,
 That likes to work an' frolic in ways that are immense!
 She says she's always happy, but yet I doubt it, too,
 An' pity her like sixty for what she has to do.
 You see, she's—well, so different, down on the farm, somehow,
 That's why I am so sorry she's in the Smart Set now.

MRS. FINDLEY BRADEN.

THE LOVE LETTERS OF A LIAR

By Mrs. William Allen

New York, Jan. 10, 1899.

I THINK you will believe me when I tell you that you have filled my heart and brain ever since some "good-night words" that you remember. You spoke with a prophetic confidence when you said you could bring back all my love for you if you cared to try. You have brought it back, sweetheart—if, indeed, it ever went away—brought it back in such a flame of color and passion that all other women in the world seem ghosts and shadows, as in the old days.

Is it only for an experiment that you have done this—is it only to test your power? If this was all, then you are more cruel even than you are beautiful, and I—just one more fool.

The quiet years—the years you wrote me of as so easy and humdrum and safe—I think have gone, and the old wild, thrilling hope of boyhood, that after all, even in the deepest shadows, never left my heart entirely—the hope that in the hidden chambers of your being your boy sweetheart was still your best and dearest—that hope has come back, and will stay with me until I carry it down into the grave. And with it comes and lingers a passionate longing to be with you "and touch you and breathe you and live."

Five years, you say, will come and go before opportunity comes again. And are you content? God help me, I am not! It shall not be, and if you really love me it will not. Is my whole life to go by with these long separated glimpses into paradise and then the dull level of life's desert

sands for years and years? I swear to you before God, and in all reverence for Him, that I believe if ever woman on this earth owed the gift of happiness to the man she loved you owe it to me, if you do really love me. Somebody says, "We love our lost loves for the love we gave them and not for anything they gave our love." Are you going to make that a bitter truth in my life forever and ever? I do not want, heaven knows, to bring any disturbing influence into your life—but oh, dear, *dear* sweetheart, I do so hunger for happiness! And nobody in the world, by fate's or God's or fortune's inscrutable chance, can bring me the supreme happiness that ought to crown every man's life but *you*. You speak to me about other women. Never for a moment have you doubted that you could bring me across the world from any other woman; perhaps it would have been far better for me if this had not been so. You know it—you have always known it—but you did not care to call me. Now I am not a boy any more—I am a man with graying hair and many sad memories and most of his illusions gone. And yet in spite of this I dream of a happiness sweeter than heaven, of which life still holds a possibility—and that happiness lies in your sweet open hands, my dearest, and no one else in the world can give it to me but you.

Now, what are you going to do? Are you unwilling to face this storm that you chose to reawaken, or are you willing to say: "He has loved me all his life and I love him for that, if nothing else, and he shall not love me any more in vain!" Will you say that?

I do not know why I have dared to write you this, except that life is slipping by and age comes before we know it. Somehow, when I am with you I cannot speak these things that crowd my heart. But if there be anything in the communion of spirits, you must have heard mine crying to you, pleading with you, for the love of God, to give me what is mine. You cannot reply to this with any force by referring to any other episodes in my life. As I said before, there has not been any time in which you could not hold me and draw me to you and mould my life as you will. I could have said, with the old dramatist, and said at any moment these many years, with some degree of truth:

Why, I hold fate clenched in my hand,
and could command the course of time's
eternal motion, hadst thou been a thought
more constant than the ebbing sea.

Now, isn't there some way for me to see you? God knows that not even for my own happiness would I have you run any risks for me. And let me beg of you right here—promise me, darling—that just as soon as you have read this letter you will destroy it and all others of mine. Believe me, it is the only way.

I do not know how you will treat me after this letter. I know what I hope, but I know, too, how often hope has failed. And I have hidden so much pain behind the smiling lips you call weak, that if the old lesson is learned over again I shall not find any new sensation in it. I have lived too long—I am too old to drench a midnight pillow any more with the tears of vain regret. But oh, sweetheart, I *do long for happiness!* “So many things must conspire to bring about a perfect opportunity.” I write the words from memory, but they stay with me. A perfect love, my darling, will make a perfect opportunity; and if you love me thus I will “command the course of time's eternal motion” to hold you on my heart again.

Good-night. I am very tired and sad, and happy, too. I am no coward, I swear it; but yet I almost fear to try

to storm the heights on which all that I love in all the world awaits my victory.

LAWRENCE.

II

New York, February 2, 1899.

MY SWEETHEART:

I have read your letter over and over and *over*, and now that I know it by heart, I know, too, that you are dearer to me than ever before—if such a thing be possible.

“What do you ask of me?” you say in it; and I answer in loyalty and perfect faith, in Tennyson's words, that you will “Lay your sweet hands in mine *and trust to me.*” That is all—that you tell me you love me and trust me.

Thrilled through as it has always been with passionate longing, all my life my love for you has been to me a holy and sacred thing, pure as the perfume of a flower; but, let me say what is true, stirring my blood with the same intoxicating perfume that some flowers possess. I *know* you understand me. I believe you understand that even if you came when I were dying and bent over me, and I felt your tears on my face, I should be happy if you said: “He gave me all his life all the love he had to give a woman, and all the passion—and the passion and the love were both without a stain.”

“The gift of happiness?” My darling, you have made me happier than I hoped again to be in my life. Not the perfect happiness that would be mine on earth if you were all my own—body, soul and heart mine only. Fate or God or chance or destiny has made this seemingly now impossible—but because you have yielded to your womanhood and owned you love me; because you have given me the fulfilment of the hope that lived through all the desolate years that some day the sweet lips would tell me so; because you have promised me that my life hereafter shall not be altogether divided from yours; because of these things I hold in my heart to-

night the gift of happiness, just as my arms have held it to my heart to-day.

You are not afraid of your love for me, are you, sweetheart? Or of mine for you? I sometimes think that, after all, knowing only one life as we do and nothing of that beyond, the heart should know its own happiness as well as its own bitterness, and that love, when we find it, should be the God who puts all things under Him and for whom the world is well lost. If you are mine and I am yours, and we are all in all to each other, then what matters anything else? Love is enough! It is a terribly fascinating thought, and there is some sense of strong rebellion, too, at fate that makes you mine and yet not wholly mine. And yet, you have not misjudged the man to whom you said: "I love you." I would rather go away from out your sight and never see you any more than make you live ever to regret that you had told me this. Such is the love I bear for you to-night, my darling, with the touch of your hands still throbbing through my pulses and the perfume of your lips still on my own.

I think I understand what it has cost you to tell me all you have. I believe I do realize what it is for a woman like you to love. And if I have ever misunderstood you and failed to comprehend I shall try never to do so any more. And I want you always to treat me just as your mood prompts you to treat me, fondly or laughingly or mockingly or tenderly, as best suits you. I don't want you ever to be sorry in your life for one single moment that you have given your heart into my keeping.

For me—I hardly realize it yet; I am stunned, almost, with the joy of it, and "all my nights are trances and all my days are dreams." And yet, in spite of all the pain and grieving and the bitterness of the old years, somehow the hope that has now been realized never, I think, altogether left me; and let me say to you with truth that the realization was sweeter than the hope that filled a thousand dreams with flame. I deny that anticipation

is better than fruition. I have felt more rapture crowded into one brief hour this day than in ten years of hopes and dreams. There is more of joy for me in the soft pressure of your little hands—there is more of heaven in the fragrance of your mouth than any heaven that hope can ever bring.

I am writing you straight from my heart of hearts, and what I write I feel. Let us have no mental reservations. We are not boy and girl any more, but man and woman. If the love you bear for me should ever wane—if mine should ever weary you, if any other should come between us, I want you to be honest and tell me so. Even if it wrench my heart out by the roots, I do not want to live one hour in a fool's paradise. And, sweetheart—my dear, *dear* love—will you not grant the request that I again make to you to destroy my letters? I know the fear is remote, but so much of peace might depend for you upon their non-existence, that even now I feel that it is almost cowardly for me to write them. Will you not do this, my darling, for my sake and because I ask you to? You will not misunderstand this request. You will know that the heart that honors while it loves you holds your safety and happiness above everything else on earth.

Good-night. It seems to me I could write you thus forever. Do not write to me unless and until you want to. I shall understand. I shall see you, I trust, in three days. Until then my life will be a dream, and that dream the sweetest woman in all this world.

LAWRENCE.

III

New York, February 8, 1899.

MADGE:

Do you know that you have written me the most beautiful letter I ever received in my life, and the most effective?

I am not ashamed to tell you, my

beloved, that part of it I have read through tears. It has made me happy, it has wrung my heart, it has appealed to all that is best and noblest in me, it has made me understand you even more than I ever did before, and I thought I knew you to your heart's sweet core, my love! What has this letter done for me? It has touched my ears and thrilled my heart with the sweetest music God gives man to hear on earth—the melody of a true woman's love crying for tenderness and protection against itself.

I cannot conceive of any circumstance or any situation or any catastrophe that would take one iota from the reverence and respect I render to your womanhood along with a passion so deep and thrilling that I myself do not understand or comprehend it. I know that I am the one love of your life, as you are the only real one of mine.

I believe that over and beyond the bonds and limitations that men have made—and properly made, I admit—there is nothing that love like ours does not sanctify and glorify, and I could take you in my arms, *all mine and wholly mine*, even to the feet of God, and say, "I bring her whose sacrifice to love has left her in my eyes and heart as sinless as your angels, and no possible heaven where *she* is not could ever be anything but hell for me."

I should always feel the same for you forever, forever. I know it.

It has been a part of my life to give you my homage. It will be until my life shall end, and yet to-night, after this letter of yours, I recognize, perhaps for the first time entirely, our fate, and I bow to it.

Never, so help me God—and I write these words, as I read yours, through tears, and with an entire realization of what they mean—never will I cause you any anxiety on this subject knowingly or willingly again. I make the renunciation to-night of the hope I had hardly realized I cherished, and, whether pain accompanies that renunciation or not, I am not un-

happy, because I know that you are mine in spirit, if not in body; because I believe that you will be changeless, and because, whether or not on earth, you are ever mine—mine only. I shall know *the white life still is white*.

I mean this, sweetheart. It is true I am writing under the powerful influence of your tender and beautiful letter. But I have thought it out besides, and taken this stand after hours and hours of striving between passion and the desire to do right.

You have said I wanted strength. It must be mine to show you that this is not true. I have it, and I pledge it to you this night, with a great sob in my heart.

Oh, well, Madge, why should the sob be there? Am I not decorated in a way that kings are not? Have I not what I have longed for all my life, and should I not be content?

I am happy in your love, dear—oh! immeasurably happy—and then it is best, no doubt, that something should be held back from us, lest earth grow too much like heaven and we worship love more than God.

You have asked me whether, if all our heart's desires could have been fulfilled, I could have been faithful to you all my life, as long as you lived, however much divided from you? Yes, sweetheart, I could. I call upon your faith in my truth and my love for you to believe and to know that. That is all I can say now.

The test will never be made—at least, until I can prove my constancy to the world as well as to you—and that time, perhaps, may never come. For the present I have put some "days and dreams out of mind, days that are over, dreams that are done."

But I shall love you all my life. You know it. There is no poem that I ever read, no poem ever written, and no song ever sung, that could describe my feeling for you, as I know it. Perhaps some day I may write that song.

Have I answered your questions, darling? I have tried, and from an honest and loyal heart.

Your letter is so sweet and tender

and passionately beautiful. It is the very supremest expression of a true love and a true womanhood I ever read.

Good-night, heart's dearest; good-night, my life's one love. I never loved you more than in this hour.

LAWRENCE.

IV

New York, March 4, 1899.

DARLING:

I waited for the message, but it did not come, and I feel that I cannot sleep to-night until I have spoken to you across the silence—to tell you how more and more each hour and day you fill my life. Does God give love like this of mine for you to many men, I wonder? Words seem so weak, so poor, to tell how every word and gesture, how every passionate and rapturous memory of you, burns and throbs and beats through my heart until I feel I must go mad for longing and for joy. Who am I, to be loved by a woman like you and with such love as you have given me? You have bestowed upon my life a new purpose—you have made it a thousand times worth living—you have made me to believe and *know* that human life can reach a point of happiness no possible heaven could ever excel. That is what your love is to me, sweetheart. I swear it to you—and knowing what it means to me, I think you should never regret a single memory of it. I do not dare to think or hope it has made you one thousandth part as happy as it has made me. An English poet says:

Love can but last with us here, at this height,
For a day and a night.

But for me, I know it can last until the final day of life and the "death-hour rounding it." But for you—ah, God! there is the fear that will creep in and chill. Am I to lose you after I have won you? Is the old agony to be lived over again? Have I climbed thus near to the heaven of my dreams

only to see the gates shut on me at the last? Will you not teach me some way, sweetheart, that I may make you mine forever? For you are mine now, "sweet eyes, sweet mouth, sweet cheeks, sweet throat, sweet hair—each singly wooed and won." Will the day dawn in which I shall know that they are mine no more? If it ever does, I hope to God I may not live to see its sunset. Do you remember what I told you was my dream last night—"how mad and bad and glad it was, but then, *how it was sweet?*" Dear sweetheart, I am only a very human man, desperately in love with you, who does not hold his life at a pin's fee compared with your happiness. You know better than I what brings you happiness or can bring it. If I can know surely what your own heart wishes, then, at whatever cost or renunciation, so help me God, I will try to bring it to you. But for a little while, sweetheart, at least, let me dream—let me dream that you are away with me, "lost in the night and the light of the sea," drifting toward that magic land where *all our hopes and dreams come true*. And as Kipling says: "It's God knows what we should find, dear lass. And it's God knows what we should do." But I think the voyage would be the sunniest a ship ever sailed, and the land we found would be fair.

Oh, what, after all, is life, and how should we use it? Is not one hour of love worth years of the dead, death-pale duty, the dull, passionless existence that so many human hearts wear out against their mortal bans? It is not every heart to whom is given the power of supreme love and supreme pain and supreme joy. Shall those who find it lose it because—they know not why? And yet, how can one argue of these things? They cannot be reasoned out. Love is like religion—a thing of faith only and impulse. And so all my argument and reasoning are set at naught, and drowned in the memory of a last "embrace in which two white arms held me fast." Oh, thank God for memory now. I used to hate it, and

think the best boon time could bring would be forgetfulness. But now—no, a thousand times no!

I fear you will think this an incoherent letter. I am writing only because my heart is suffocating with its passion. Good-night. I am going away in the ship of dreams. Do you know who is going with me? Listen while I whisper down through your breast into your heart. One is going upon that ship who will put white arms around my throat and say:

Ask me no more, my fate and thine are sealed;

I strove against the tide and all in vain.

Let the great river take me to the main.

No more, dear love—for at a touch I yield—

Ask me no more.

LAWRENCE.

V

New York, May 3, 1899.

MADGE:

I have your letter and I do not know whether you mean what you say in it or not.

You know I love you, if you know or believe anything. You love me, too, very dearly—you have told me this, and God knows you have proved it. But you appear to have no faith in me. I do not understand how love and faith can be separated. If I have tried to make you understand anything, it has been that I am happiest when with you, that the sight of your face is my heaven—and yet you practically charge me in your letter with neglect.

I do not think you are too exacting. Love is always exacting, but it is generous and considerate and forgiving, too. A heart that loves—with faith—would know and tell itself: "He is not here—I am not in his arms, through no lack of longing on his part, but because he is held away from me by a force he cannot guide. And instead of reproaching him, my love for him grows deeper and stronger every hour."

It seems to me this is the way a loving heart would speak, but perhaps I do

not know. Oh, please don't quarrel with me, but love me and believe in me, and understand that you are the one thing on earth that I love with all my heart and soul.

LAWRENCE.

VI

New York, Sept. 10, 1899.

MADGE:

Here are the answers to the questions you ask, and which I am asked to give you before the past is hermetically sealed.

Yes, I was unfaithful to you at Narragansett. I remember, when I bade you good-bye in July, that you said you had a premonition that it was forever; but I laughed at the idea. I remember that I did avoid the answer to your questions, in my letters—I thought I would tell you all about it when I saw you, and I went to Newport intending and expecting to do so. But I tell you now that I do not recollect any questions or allusions to the matter made by you while I was there. Nor do I remember, save so vaguely that I cannot venture to recall it here, what, "when I bade you good-bye, I made you swear to." I received the letter saying you would return on a certain day. My mail was delayed—I was nervous. Newport had made me think that you would not really care much whether I came or not, and I dreaded the heartache and misery of explanations. Not brave, perhaps, but God's truth.

Yes, I am to marry a very dear and lovely girl, and I love her. She is rich, so I have heard since my engagement, but I knew nothing of this when I asked her to marry me. I do not suppose the world at large will believe this, but I do not care what the world believes. I want to try and be a better man, to catch some years of peace and contentment, and to be, as nearly as I can, worthy of her.

I will be glad to come to see you sometimes if you will let me.

In all the sorrow and all the happiness the past has held for me, I have

never harbored a bitter thought or spoken a bitter word of you.

LAWRENCE.

VII

New York, Sept. 16, 1899.

MADGE:

I have read carefully what you sent me, a copy of all my letters, as you asked me to do.

I did not lie to you then. I believed it to be true, nor did I believe any change would come. I do not lie to you now. She is a dear and lovely girl, and she is rich. She has said she would marry me, and I want to try to be worthy of her.

I have suffered. My heart has been wrung—beyond what any words of mine can tell you—at causing you pain. God knows this is true.

She fixed the date for the 20th of October after she left New York. My foreknowledge was the understanding only that the engagement was not to be a long one. She has told her family and friends, as I have mine. Everybody who knows her or me practically knows the date that has been set. She has asked all her bridesmaids, and the costumes have been ordered for that time.

How *can* I change the date? Yes, I know it was the 20th of last October that I told you I loved you. I beg of you, for the sake of one who I do not think ever gave anyone pain knowingly in her life, to withdraw your request, for the sake of my sister, whom you know and esteem, for the sake of my dead mother, whom you used to love.

I know there is no service that you would ever accept from me now, if I

could render it, but one who has gone down on his knees and asked God's forgiveness in agony and tears makes this appeal to you. I ask you to try and think more gently of me.

I am going to try with all my endeavor to be a better man, to act as one who is trying his best hereafter to do right. Will *you* not help me? I ask you, I appeal to you, if not for my sake, for the sake of a girl who should not suffer for my faults, not to ask this of me.

Just forget your own suffering, your own humiliation. And remember, her wealth can advance me politically. My ambition is dearer to me than any woman. Grant my request, and send me a telegram saying, "I do!"

And in this last letter, and to my dying day, I ask God's mercy and tenderness and protection for you.

LAWRENCE GODDARD.

VIII

Washington, D.C., Sept. 18, 1899.

LAWRENCE GODDARD, Esq.:

Your letter of Sept. 16 to poor, misguided Madge came to me by mistake. It requires much talent and much more feeling to break off an attachment amiably than to begin it. Hence, I return to you the letter meant for her, so you can despatch it forthwith. Such ingenuity of expression should not be relegated to the waste-paper basket. As for myself, I find, after careful investigation, that my bank account is not sufficiently large to maintain myself and your political ambitions. So we will "call it off." Good-bye.

KITTY SHERMAN.



HIS ONE CHANCE OF ENJOYMENT

BELLE—Did the minister kiss you?

THE BRIDE (*very pretty*)—Of course. Have you never seen his wife?

A CHANGE OF HEART

SHE said that "her heart was broken—
 That all men were cold and mean;
 As a spinster she'd live forever."
 I think she was just eighteen.

He said that "his life was blighted;
 That his faith in women was dead."
 In fact, she was quite affrighted
 At the terrible things he said.

They swore they could ne'er be happy;
 That neither could love again.
 My word! but he hated women!
 I say! how she hated men!

Well, she carried her grief to Newport;
 And moped for a week or two,
 Till her brother came down from Harvard
 With a man who had rowed on his crew.

And she and the man grew chummy,
 Read Kipling, just at the start,
 But truly his eyes were fetching
 And somehow he mended her heart.

And he—he sailed for Europe;
 And sulked for a day or so,
 Till a maiden, "used to the motion,"
 Emerged from the depths below.

A maiden he'd met last Summer;
 To comfort him she contrived,
 And he found, when land was sighted,
 His faith in women revived.

They swore they could ne'er be happy,
 That neither could love again—
 My word! but he hated women!
 I say! how she hated men!

BRUCE DUSTAN.



PEOPLE are always amusing—sometimes intentionally.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

By Frank W. Noxon

PROBABLY it was Orstridge's own patient endurance of any abuse under which Saffron chose to smother him that challenged Saffron to persist, and another motive was a pride of oratory. Saffron loved to talk, and Orstridge was a topic.

"Ah!" Saffron would exclaim, in a rising inflection of extravagant delight, as he put on his apron in the morning. "I see Orstridge is with us. Orstridge, if I were you I'd stay at home all the time. Think of the room rent you lose while you're down here!"

Orstridge, who was rather thrifty, would scratch his head in bewildered silence with the T-square and go on with his plan.

"Say, Orstridge," Saffron would continue, presently, "can't you sublet your bedroom during the day? I should think the time you lose would worry you to death."

Still no reply.

"The omniscient Orstridge!" the tormentor would persist, working with swift and sure strokes at the drawing before him. "But without enough sand to put his head in!"

Besides the name and the thrift, Saffron elaborated on Orstridge's piety, his works of organized charity, his passion for fashion, his girl, his coyness of the truth, his pusillanimity.

"By the T-square of Archimedes, Orstridge!" he exclaimed once, "a man that has stood all the things I've said to you deserves 'em. My conscience feels as comfortable as a silk undershirt. The only thing I'm worrying about is that I'm too easy with you. What'll you do if you ever

get into an office where you haven't any friends? We fellows protect you because we love you. What show would a psalm-singing usurer like you have among strangers? On your knees, on your knees, Orstridge, and thank God."

We were paid by the week, but there were frequent errands to be run and trips out of town, so there was usually an expense account, and we made out bills for the total. Mr. Armitage had a little black tin letter-box over his desk where we put the bills on Thursdays. I hadn't the least idea what Saffron received, nor he what I received. We didn't discuss the matter. One Thursday Orstridge was left alone in the office, and when I came in I caught him reading the bills. He whisked them back in confusion.

"Orstridge," said I, "this has got to be known. You do that again when everybody gets back, or I'll tell about it."

Before the boss came in I had to tell.

Saffron stood for a moment silent with amazement. "Orstridge," he said, "how dare you live? Don't you know you may get married and have a lot of little Orstridges? I'm going to get out an injunction restraining you from handing yourself down."

Orstridge put on his coat and slunk away.

"If I knew that man's girl," said Saffron, "I'd confer a service on society and marry her myself. I'm going out to get drunk."

This was no ordinary threat. Saffron had an erratic plan of life which we had all entreated him to abandon,

but to which he clung. Instead of taking a stein of beer when he wanted it, regularly, every day, he would swear off and stick for months. Then when he could stand it no longer he would go on a whirl that usually cut three days out of his week at the office.

"See you Monday," called Heidecker, cheerfully, as we started out.

II

WE went to the St. John and sat down in the café with Mr. Bickford, who lives with us at Mrs. Gerald's. He was just having coffee.

"Two Martinis and two Manhattans," said Saffron. "What are *you* going to drink?"

"Highly tighty!" cried Mr. Bickford. "What's up?"

"Orstridge," I told him. "Martini."

"Three Martinis," said Saffron.

"That man seems to distress you boys," said the old gentleman. "Who is he?"

"And two Manhattans?" asked the waiter.

"That's it," said Saffron. "He's a sanctified fake."

The waiter stood with ear inclined to hear the fare order.

"Pious hypocrite?" suggested Mr. Bickford.

"Pious as the devil," assented Saffron. "But he's sincere all right. If Orstridge really knew his nerve sarsaparilla was half alcohol he'd shake it."

"He has a talent," I explained, "for being dishonorable without being dishonest."

"Religion without compassion," said Saffron. "Like to kill off all the enemies of the Lord he can and send the rest to Coventry."

"Admits he likes Kipling's 'Recessional,'" I added.

"Will you have the drinks first, sir?" said the waiter.

"No—wait a second," said Saffron. Mr. Bickford rose. "Probably prays in his room—alone—where it won't do him any good."

"I'll tell you the trouble with you, my boy," said the old gentleman, with his hand on Saffron's shoulder. "I told your father so at the time. When you were an infant you had to sing in a boys' choir and look solemn. You've never quite gotten over the reaction. I'm afraid you're impious."

"It's barely possible," returned Saffron, with an affectionate grin, as Mr. Bickford went smiling out. "Orstridge! Enemies of the Lord!" he grumbled on. "Pulls his skirts away like a respectable woman from a Tanqueray. Ugh!"

We took up the menu. When I looked up Saffron was staring over my shoulder. I turned and saw Edith Shugrue laying off her sacque.

"Hello, Orstridge's girl!" I remarked.

"A queen!" gasped Saffron. "What does that want with Orstridge?"

"He doesn't drink," said I.

"Who the devil does?" retorted Saffron.

"Her father," I replied.

"The old man's a brute!" exclaimed Saffron.

I turned again, and Edith bowed.

"You know they're not engaged," I observed.

Saffron gazed at me and said to the waiter: "You needn't bring any cock-tails. Bring soup—in a cup."

"Chicken broth, sir?"

"That's the tippie. Chicken broth in a cup. And after that we'll have waffles and syrup and a glass of milk. Is that yours?" he demanded.

"No," said I. "Bring me a Martini and a small tenderloin."

"Bring the broth in a cup," added Saffron. "And we probably sha'n't sit at this table. Don't set it out till you notice."

"Very well, sir."

"Well?" inquired Saffron, as I munched a piece of sugar.

"What?" I asked, innocently.

"Aren't you going to present me at court?"

"Oh, certainly. I'll ask her," I replied, and went over to Edith's table.

"Father and I are going to the

circus," she explained. "Isn't that Mr. Saffron?"

"Yes. May I bring him over?"

"Oh, yes; certainly."

We had two waiters—ours and hers.

"What are we going to do to make this man give up cocktails," observed Saffron, sipping his soup.

"What man?" she said, starting and turning around.

"Why, me." I snapped, kicking Saffron on the shin and waving my glass.

"Oh!" she said, with relief. "I don't know."

Then she forgot her trouble and inquired, curiously: "You have been in the office longer than Mr. Orstridge, haven't you?"

"Much—much," said Saffron.

"I think he seems very clever, don't you?"

Saffron took another sip of soup without having any expression on his face at all. He neither frowned nor smiled. When he answered he looked her square in the eyes: "I think he is. Most of us thought his Montclair cottage was the prettiest thing we built last year."

"Was that Mr. Orstridge's?"

"Certainly. Does he say it wasn't?" asked Saffron, squinting.

"No; he says it *was*."

We all laughed.

"I heard him propose the idea," said Saffron, "and he did all the work. Not so strong, but fanciful and clever."

"Seems to smile at you as you go up from the station," I remarked.

"And Mr. Armitage gets the credit," observed Edith.

"He pays the office rent," said Saffron.

We talked and ate for a while, Edith looking oftener and oftener toward the entrance. "I'm afraid," she said at last, "that my father— isn't coming."

"But you can't miss the circus," put in Saffron. He turned to me. "I suppose you simply must meet your cousin." He kicked my instep. I haven't any cousin, but said I didn't

see how I could get out of it. "I was going to say," he persisted, "you might take Miss Shugrue. You know her well enough, don't you?"

"He knows me too well," retorted Edith, laughing at his specious pathos. Then she put on the manner of an indulgent mamma, and said: "Come along, Mr. Saffron. I'll take you. Here are the tickets, and you'll find car fare and peanut money in the pocketbook."

Saffron blushed. He fidgeted a little, and was about to speak, when she said to me: "Won't you tuck in my sleeves? Mr. Saffron doesn't seem to know how. Thank you. Come along."

And in another minute I was left alone with Saffron's empty milk glass.

III

SAFFRON got home before twelve. I was just getting out of my clothes.

"Where's 'Alice in Wonderland?'" he inquired, hanging up his coat.

"The little girl down stairs has it," I answered. "Here's the 'Looking Glass.' There are queens in that."

"Thanks," he said, taking it. "Can you sleep with this light?"

"Sure," I replied, turning my face toward the wall. "Go ahead and read."

After a time he closed the book and said, "Asleep?"

"Nope."

"I'm engaged."

"Is *she*?"

"No."

I laughed into the pillow.

It took him a quarter of an hour to undress. "Asleep?" he asked, putting out the light.

"Nope."

"Made me put her into a cab at Madison Square Garden."

"Hope she got home all right."

"I know she did."

"You do?"

"Followed her in another cab, and watched from the corner. Wish I knew about her father."

"Oh, that's all right."

"How do you know?"

"I took him home at half-past nine."

"Oh! He came?"

"Came!" said I, "he *arrived*."

"Speechless?"

"Nothing but speech."

"Thanks, old man."

"It's none of your business. Go to sleep."

So I was able to surprise Armitage's in the morning by bringing Saffron in with me at nine of the clock with a firm, fit, tubbed look, and a carnation.

"Saffron," said Heidecker, severely, "you're sober."

"That's all right, Heidecker," replied Saffron. "When I'm sober, I'm sober. I don't go around in daylight in a perpetual state of half-soak. I'm not a pickle. Look at that line. Do you call that a right angle?"

"I made it with the square," Heidecker protested.

"Oh, anybody can see who made it!" retorted Saffron.

He exhibited the irritability of one on the next day after not being in liquor.

Orstridge came in.

"Ah, the singer!" cried Saffron.

This was new. We all looked up, and Orstridge appeared disturbed. He glanced timorously at Saffron.

"Orstridge," began Saffron, "I wish you wouldn't practice 'The Palms' at night. I went past your house last night in an automobile, and the automobile shied."

"I didn't sing 'The Palms' last night," quoth Orstridge.

"I didn't say you sang it," replied Saffron. "I said you practiced it."

So Orstridge could sing! We learned more about Orstridge that day than we had ever known before.

"Look here, Orstridge," Saffron remarked. "You can hammer plaques and brass, can't you? How much'll you take to teach me? I believe, with a few years' toil, I could hammer your countenance into a face."

It went on this way for several days. Saffron came home early every night. He exchanged "Through the

Looking Glass" for "Alice in Wonderland" with the little girl down stairs, and afterward she lent him "Under the Window," by Kate Greenaway.

One night he said, "I've turned the trick."

"What?" I asked.

"She'll have me."

We shook hands, then sat down and stared at each other for a while; and I looked around the room trying not to feel lonesome. Then, in the manner of those intelligent persons who inquire, "What time did he die?" I said, "How about Orstridge?"

"He's due up there to-night. She'll wear the ring."

IV

ONE Saturday afternoon I got home about four o'clock. Saffron had left the office at noon. Presently there was confusion on the landing. It was Saffron, so drunk he couldn't walk, and Orstridge bringing him up stairs.

"Orstridge," said Saffron, on the threshold, "you're a trained nurse."

We put him on the bed.

"Where'd you find him?" I asked in the entry.

"Standing by Horace Greeley telling a crowd he could walk down Broadway with one foot and down Sixth avenue with the other," explained Orstridge. "I got him into a cab. Has he any engagement?"

I nodded. "Theatre."

"Of course he can't go," suggested Orstridge.

"Guess not," said I.

"How about her?"

"Don't know," I answered, hopelessly.

"I'd better go and lie to her," Orstridge offered. "Tell him in the morning he had to go up to Albany with Armitage. I'll tell her that. Don't let her see him till he's fit. If you do she'll chuck him."

I rubbed my eyes, but there was no doubt about it. There stood Orstridge in the entry. If any other man I knew had brought Saffron home—in-

deed, all the men I knew had brought him home—but Orstridge! “If he does pray,” I said to myself, “he prays that the enemies of the Lord may be brought low, not that they may be brought home in cabs.”

I reached out my hand, hoping he would tell me to go to the devil and turn on his heel. But you never can tell. He shook, and seemed rather pleased as he hurried down stairs.

Sunday morning I wrote what I thought Saffron ought to do, and when his intellect had begun to feel less like an oak-plant outgrowing a Sèvres vase, I calmly observed:

“Saffron, you’re engaged to be married, and the girl thinks you don’t lush. You’ve got to sign this pledge.”

Somebody slammed the front door three floors below, and Saffron’s vase strained again.

“I should think they’d have portières in Summer,” he wailed.

I held out the pledge, but he waved me away.

“What are you giving us?” he complained. “I could never abstain.”

“You can read, can’t you?”

“I used to—yesterday.” He sat down with infinite caution and received the paper. “I promise to take at least one hard drink every day for a year.”

“That’s what you want,” I urged—“regular habits. Get some morality about you. Now be a man and stick your fist on that.”

He read it over several times. Finally he accepted the pen and executed the instrument.

I knew how Orstridge must feel, and by Monday morning Saffron’s thoughts had been put in such repair that he remarked at breakfast: “Orstridge is probably scared to death for fear I’ll present him with a loving cup in the office. What made him do it?”

“What makes anybody do any-

thing?” I replied. “He himself probably doesn’t know why he did it.”

“I know—but it was so utterly inconsistent with everything else we know about him,” Saffron persisted.

“Will you please pass the salt?” remarked Mr. Bickford, from the other side of the table. “Thanks. Did you ever see a man that wasn’t inconsistent? The only place you see consistent men is at the Fourteenth Street Theatre and in Howells.”

“Good gracious!” I gasped. “Howells not real?”

“Howells,” said Saffron, “is Henry James and treacle. Come on.”

V

ORSTRIDGE certainly did look concerned. He hated to be noticed, and the idea of a sudden and conspicuous abandonment of the pleasantries with which Saffron had so long strewn his path may well have been disconcerting. He was the first man in the office. Saffron and I came in next, and Saffron merely nodded and got to work. When everybody had come Saffron edged around to the side of his table nearest Orstridge.

“Orstridge,” he observed, jovially, “your mind is rotting, like a tooth. Why don’t you have it pulled?” Then he leaned over and whispered: “Now fight, you chump!”

Orstridge threw down his compasses and jumped at Saffron. They clinched and wrestled. Orstridge administered several ungraceful but vivacious punches, some of which reached Saffron’s face, and Saffron dropped under. Then Orstridge went back to his desk amid a loud sound.

Saffron got up, dusted himself off, attended to his nose, erased a plinth, and, as he re-drew it, stood off surveying the plan critically, and observed: “Orstridge, what delayed you?”



IN THE PARQUE CENTRAL

TWILIGHT falls, and darkness after,
 Swiftly on the Southern air;
 There is music, light and laughter
 In the old Havana square;
Caballero, Cuban maid,
 On the brilliant promenade,
 Flirt of fan and clink of glasses in the gaslight and the dark,
 And the wide-mouthed, crimson flowers
 Blaze through all the perfumed hours,
 When the Spanish band is playing in the Park.

To the old Castilian measure
 Slow the dark-eyed girls go past;
 Tropic queens of love and pleasure,
 Spanish maid and quarter-caste;
 Inez, Tula, Mariquita,
 Marguerita, Carmencita,
 From their black mantillas glancing where no prying eye must mark;
 Happy youth who gains a glance
 From those daughters of romance,
 When the band plays the *cachucha* in the Park!

Blood-red droop the blossoms wreathing
 Round the garish lamps alight,
 And the sweetness of their breathing
 Burdens all the languid night.
 Through the darkness and the heat
 Throbs the fountain's liquid beat,
 And a million golden fireflies mock the *cigaritto's* spark.
 Ah, enchantment of the place,
 And the Spanish speech and grace,
 And the Spanish music playing in the Park!

Love and hate awake as surely,
 Fierce as fire and black as hell,
 When the girls go out demurely—
 They have done their work too well.
 Do you know, my señorita,
 Mariquita, Carmencita,
 There'll be something found at daybreak that is cold and grim and stark?
 Sorrow may your hearts discover;
 One of you shall lose a lover
 When the band has finished playing in the Park.

FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S REGRETS

By Louise Winter

"CONCEPCION! Concepcion! where are the spoons?"

A fat, elderly negress waddled into the room at the call, and stood drying her hands on her apron.

"The spoons, Niña Lolita, the spoons?" she repeated, vacantly.

"Yes, stupid, where are they? Do you think we can eat without them, when our breakfast consists only of rice and coffee? Don't stand there staring at me! See, they are not in the drawer, and yet I counted them myself last night before putting them away." The girl pointed impatiently to the open drawer of the sideboard, which was empty.

"I have not seen them, Niña Lola, since I brought them to you last night after dinner—" Then a look of horror spread over the ebony countenance. "*Maria Santissima!* you do not think I took them?" she cried, shrilly.

Her young mistress stood a moment irresolute, then she crossed the room and laid her hand kindly on the old servant's shoulder.

"Come, Concepcion, of course I never thought of such a thing," she said, giving the fat shoulder a pat of assurance; but Concepcion refused to be conciliated so easily.

"To suspect me, señorita!"—the formal term of señorita was used only when Concepcion was on her dignity; she had formerly been a slave in the household—"I, whom your sainted father gave to your mother when they were married! I, who nursed you all, from Pepe to Mariquita! I, guilty of robbing my own family!" Her voice rose, and ended in a shriek.

"Be quiet, Concepcion, or mamá will hear you. No one knows better than I do what you have been to us; but the spoons are gone."

This was an incontestable fact, and though Concepcion made an elaborate search, while the señorita looked on, there was no trace of a spoon.

"What will the señora say?" murmured the old woman, shaking her head dejectedly.

"Poor mamá! She valued them so highly, and they were beautiful, weren't they, Concepcion?"

"Indeed they were, Niña Lolita," and Concepcion gave a final sigh as she went back to her kitchen.

Lola resumed her task of setting the table. A knock at the street door broke in upon her sorrowful reflections.

She listened. The arrival was greeted noisily by the children.

"Pepe!" ejaculated the girl, and a few moments later her brother came into the dining-room.

"I thought you had gone to the country," she said, mildly, surprised at his appearance.

He shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "I was detained; more trouble with the American Government," he answered; then he threw a package on the table. "Here," he added, "I brought you these."

Lola picked it up quietly and untied the string. A dozen plated spoons slipped from her fingers as she sank into a chair and stared with great, accusing eyes at her brother.

He was a handsome, lithe young fellow, with eyes matching her own and a diminutive mustache curled at the ends. He was clad in a gray suit,

and wore a flower in his buttonhole. "Lola," he began, apologetically; but she cut him short.

"Couldn't you leave us the spoons, Pepe?" she demanded, bitterly. "They were all we had to remind us of our old days. Plated forks we put up with, but to exchange our beautiful spoons for these—oh, it is too much! How I hate the Americans, who are making slaves of us! They are worse than the Spaniards—they take everything!" And Lola began to cry softly.

Pepe stood twisting his mustache. "What can we do, Lola *mia*? The Americans are in possession of the island, their soldiers enforce obedience; they tax us, and we must pay or go to prison. This last tax is unjust, but I cannot help that! We have no money, we have sold everything of value in the house, and the spoons had to go." He lied glibly, with an ease born of long practice. It was so simple to blame the hated Americans and to conceal his gambling losses under the name of taxes.

Lola did not doubt him. He was the head of the family now, and his word was all-sufficient.

Up stairs the poor stricken mother spent her days lamenting the death of her idolized husband; and Lola, at the age of seventeen, found the house and six younger children almost more than she could manage.

Only a few years ago the circumstances had been very different. Then they had lived in a suburb of Havana, in a large house with a magnificent garden, and their servants had exceeded in number the members of the family. Their Summers had been spent either in Europe or at Saratoga.

But when the war broke out her father had moved them to the city, to this little house in the *calle* Animas, and of all their servants had retained only Concepcion and her daughter, Blanca.

José de Montalvo had disappeared shortly after, and only the elder children knew that he had gone to fight for liberty.

A year later came the news of his death, and his widow kept to her room and refused to be comforted.

At first there had been money enough for all expenses, but one day Lola realized that they were drawing constantly from their fund without adding a *peseta* to it. Terrified at the prospect of ultimate poverty, she appealed to Pepe. He, however, had no suggestion to make.

"What can I do? Perhaps when the war is over I may be able to resume my law studies," he said, carelessly.

So there was no hope from that quarter.

Meanwhile, the war had ended and the Americans had taken possession of the island. The most extravagant prophecies were indulged in, and the population dreamed of an ideal period of prosperity.

All Americans were rich, they argued, and in a few months they would teach their secret of wealth-getting to the Cubans. But it required only a few weeks to undeceive the too sanguine natives. The Cubans were to work out their own salvation, to be governed until they had been educated up to the point of self-government; and the spoiled children of the South saw their fantastic dreams vanish into thin air.

The little household in the *calle* Animas gleaned its impression of the foreigners from the head of the house, who had no love for a nation of workers.

The fund grew rapidly less, and Lola made another statement of the case to her brother.

"Sell something," he suggested. "We have a lot of useless articles in the *sala*—pictures, bronzes, marbles, that father picked up in Europe, and I've heard that those things bring good prices."

The widow resigned all management into her children's hands, and the art treasures that José de Montalvo had collected so lovingly found their way to the second-hand shops that flourish in Havana.

Next went the jewelry, then the

massive silver service—for the Americans, not content with confiscating property, had begun to levy enormous taxes on the unfortunate Cubans—at least, so Pepe informed his sister, and the girl's heart had burned with rage against the interlopers. And now, to-day, the spoons had gone, virtually the last relic of their days of affluence, and Lola felt as if she lacked courage to keep up the fight.

Finally, she raised her head and faced her brother, with a deeper shadow in her lovely eyes.

"You have kept your ring, and your gold sleeve-buttons," she said, reproachfully.

Pepe frowned as he glanced at the snake ring with the large diamond that coiled around the little finger of his right hand.

"A man must have some jewelry," he answered, with a show of offended dignity.

Lola picked up the spoons and examined them thoughtfully. "Did you come home in a cab?" she asked; "I thought I heard wheels."

"What will you? I could not walk in this heat," he answered, airily, taking the carnation from his buttonhole and putting it in a glass of water, to keep it fresh against the time he should go out again.

It was a little after four o'clock when Lola left the house, attended by Blanca, Concepcion's daughter.

She was dressed simply in a linen lawn, with a black ribbon collar and belt, and a hat of black straw that her mother had purchased many years ago in Paris. Her face was pretty enough to attract attention, no matter how plain her attire, and she encountered many a glance of admiration from the men who passed her in the streets.

But she was too busy with her sorrowful thoughts to heed the comments on her appearance. She was about to make a supreme sacrifice and offer up her last treasure on the altar of domestic economy—a string of small pearls, which her father had given her during their last stay in Europe, and to which she had clung tena-

ciously, as a gift from the dear one who had died so far away from them all.

This morning, however, she had determined to give up her pearls in exchange for the spoons, and spare her mother an added sorrow. She had not been willing to trust her mission to her brother, for a glimmer of his selfishness was beginning to dawn upon her; and, though she had no experience of second-hand shops, she put her pride into her pocket and went boldly out, accompanied by Blanca, whom she had sworn to secrecy. She knew the shop to which Pepe had taken their things; it was quite a prominent one in the *calle Obispo*.

As she entered it, a young man who was leaning over the counter examining some goods looked up. The proprietor left the old customer to welcome the new one.

"I have something to sell," began Lola, almost in a whisper, taking the jewel-case out of her pocket. "A string of pearls." She snapped the spring and held them out to him timidly.

The shopkeeper walked back to the counter, and Lola followed, when her eyes fell upon her beloved spoons, ranged temptingly on a velvet square in front of the young man.

They were very old, of an elaborate design, and bore a crest repoussé on the handles.

Lola made a movement forward and glanced threateningly at the prospective purchaser. She saw that he was an American, one of the abhorred race.

A tall, broad-shouldered young man, clean shaven and muscular, with honest blue eyes, brown hair and a very determined chin.

"I think I will take these," he said, in English, indicating the spoons. "How much, *cuanto?*"

Lola made a gesture of interference. "No, no, he cannot have them!" she exclaimed, rapidly. "They are mine—I came to buy them back—that is why I sell the pearls. You understand, the *Ameri-*

cano cannot have them. Tell him so at once—they are mine!"

The shopkeeper opened his eyes. "Pardon, señorita," he said, suavely; "these were brought to me this morning by a young gentleman."

"Yes, by my brother, José de Montalvo."

"That is right; and now you wish to possess them again? Wait, I will explain to the *caballero Americano*." He turned to the stranger politely and said: "The señorita say the spoons to her belong. It is a mistake they are sold, and she wish them again. You will permit, señor? You will select something else?"

"Certainly," answered young Heathcote, gallantly; "I am only too glad to oblige the señorita," and he raised his hat and saluted her gravely.

Lola, who understood English, felt no gratitude for his act; on the contrary, at sight of him all her smouldering resentment against the oppressors of her country burst into flame. She turned fiercely upon Heathcote. "If it were not for you," she said, "we need not sell—you who come in the name of friend and are enemy!"

"I am sorry, but the Americans did not begin the war," he answered, warmly.

"Begin?—no, they come when it is finish, and take our *gloria* from us, and now we starve to pay your unjust taxes! That for your free country!" and she snapped her fingers.

"Unjust taxes!" repeated Heathcote, wondering.

"Yes, when my brother sell our spoons this morning so we not lose our house. The three tax in four months!"

There was such a world of scorn in her voice that Heathcote started as if he had been struck. He gazed inquiringly at the shopkeeper, but Don Antonio shrugged his shoulders and kept silence.

Then Lola, as if ashamed of her conference with the enemy, turned her back on him and addressed herself to Don Antonio. "How much

for the pearls? Quick, I must be going!"

"Twenty-five dollars."

"Twenty-five dollars! You must be crazy!"

"Twenty-five and the spoons."

"My father gave five hundred for them."

"Years ago. Pearls are not what they were, and besides, these are not perfect," and Don Antonio glanced at them contemptuously.

Lola's cheeks burned. She knew he was undervaluing them, but she could not bicker while the tall American stood so near.

"Give me thirty and you can have them," she said, finally, and the bargain was concluded.

As Don Antonio was wrapping up the spoons Heathcote approached Lola again.

"Pardon me, señorita, but did you say you had paid taxes three times in four months?" he asked.

"Yes, señor."

"Then someone is deceiving you."

"I think not, señor. My brother he know. You are cruel, you Americans, to make war on women, for we it is who suffer now," she cried, bitterly.

"I still think you are mistaken. Such cruelty would be unheard of."

She flashed him a glance of interest. "You belong to the Government?" she asked, curiously.

Heathcote hesitated. He had an uncle in Congress. "Yes. Perhaps I can be of service to you. If there has been any injustice done I will do all in my power to right it."

"You are most kind, señor."

"May I not know whom I am to assist?" he asked, smiling pleasantly.

"The family of the widow of José de Montalvo."

"And you live—?"

"In the *calle Animas*, señor, *numero 21*."

"Let me write it down," he urged, and Lola gravely repeated the name and address, then, after receiving the package of spoons and the money from Don Antonio, she curtsied gracefully to Heathcote and left the

shop, followed by the astounded Blanca.

"Who is deceiving her?" asked Heathcote, carelessly, as she disappeared.

"Her brother, a young rascal, he sell everything for money to gamble. If he say it is the American Government who get his money, perhaps he is not wrong. He play much poker with the American *oficiales*," explained Don Antonio, courteously.

"So that's it? Well, how much do you want for the pearls?"

When Heathcote left the shop he had the case in his waistcoat pocket.

He had come to Cuba idly with the first crowd of tourists, but he had lingered after the others of his party had gone, interested in the social aspect of the island. He had traveled extensively, and he had a well-developed strain of romanticism in his nature, so that the people, simple yet subtle, old world yet modern to their finger-tips, had a wondrous fascination for him. He had visited the churches, the theatres, the shops, trying to imbue himself with the local atmosphere, but until his encounter with Lola de Montalvo he had not spoken to one of the young girls he so greatly admired.

He drove back to his hotel, and meeting a Cuban-American acquaintance in the corridor, he made casual mention of the name Montalvo.

"Montalvo," repeated his friend. "There is the Marques de Montalvo, Enrique, Juan Antonio, his cousin, and the greatest rascal of them all, José Maria, the son of the widow."

"Has he a sister?"

"Several, I believe. Dolores, the eldest, I remember meeting when they lived in the Cerro. Very pretty, very *graciosa*. *Probrecita!* now they live in the *calle Animas*, and she goes nowhere, neither to *réuniones*, nor to *el teatro*, nor to *bailles*, and she danced—*Dios mio!* how she could dance!"

"Oh!" murmured Heathcote. This certainly was his little acquaintance.

"Dolores!" He rolled the sonorous name like a choice bit under his tongue, and then rang the changes

on it. Dolores, Lola, Lolita! What a name to conjure with!

The next afternoon Heathcote stepped out of a cab in front of the little house in the *calle Animas*, and raised the knocker on the wooden door.

Blanca admitted him, open-mouthed with astonishment.

"Is the señorita at home?" he asked.

"*Entre*, señor," and Blanca ushered him into the *sala*.

He looked around curiously. The stone floor, the whitewashed walls and ceiling, the chairs ranged stiffly around the room, the marble-topped table in the centre with its vase of artificial flowers, seemed uninviting. Then Lola appeared in the doorway, and he forgot the bare aspect of the room.

"You ask for me, señor?" she said.

"Yes; I come about the Government affair." He had decided to use that pretense as an entering wedge.

"Seat yourself," and she motioned to a chair, occupying one herself and sitting upright, as if to preclude any idea of familiarity.

She would not have received a male visitor alone, but an official connected with the Government was different; besides, the children were playing in the *ante-sala*, and making a good deal of noise, so the American could see that she was observing the proprieties. She had not been able to tell Pepe of her adventure, for he had gone into the country to see about a sugar estate that they hoped to dispose of shortly.

"I have been inquiring into your affairs this morning, and I find that the Government is at fault. It has no intention to tax widows and orphans, and the mistake will be rectified as soon as possible." Heathcote found it difficult to go on with his story, under the scrutiny of those magnificent dark eyes.

"You are most kind, señor, to take this much trouble." Lola was beginning to thaw.

"Where did you learn to speak English?" he queried, eagerly.

"I have been to Saratoga three times, and I had an American government for two years, but I am in English—what you call—rusty—no?"

He vowed she spoke perfectly.

"Oh, you flatter," she said, demurely, with lowered eyes.

"Honest, now, I mean it. English with an accent is perfect. If I could only speak Spanish as well!"

"You not speak Spanish at all?"

"A few words merely. *Bu-en-as di-as, muy bi-en, per-fec-ta-men-te*, and *da-me un—*" He paused, but Lola was smiling.

"*Un* what?" she asked.

"*Un be—no, un va-so de agua*," he concluded. No, he would not trifle with her, and to ask for a kiss at this juncture would surely lose him her favor.

Lola laughed; his pronunciation was so funny, and he wrinkled up his forehead as if it cost him a great effort to remember his simple sentence.

"*Bueno*, that is very good," she said, encouragingly. There was something attractive about this American; then, as she recalled his nationality, she remembered that he had come on business, and her face assumed a look of gravity.

"I fear I interrupt, señor; you come about the Government, and I make play," she said, deprecatingly.

He followed her lead. "Perhaps I would better introduce myself—here is my card." He rose and handed her a bit of pasteboard.

"Philip, that is our Felipe, Eas—Eaf—oh, señor, your American names I get never," and she shook her head despondently.

"Heathcote," he repeated, slowly.

"No, I try it not; it is too *difícil*. And the Government?"

"Er—can you tell me how much you have paid lately in taxes, señorita?"

"Perhaps I better ask my brother, to make certain."

"No, don't do that," he interposed, quickly.

"*Porque—why?*"

"Because, you see—" Heathcote

was embarrassed—"suppose we surprise him. If the Government won't pay it back, he may be so disappointed, but if it does, it will be much nicer to make it a surprise—don't you see?" he urged, eagerly. She must not tell her brother; at least, not yet.

"I rather tell Pepe; he understand these things more better than I, but, as you say, it will be a surprise; besides, Pepe has gone away for a few days. Perhaps, when he return, it will be all settled."

"And the amounts?"

Lola sat thinking deeply. "I know he pay first sixteen dollars, then he pay twenty-five dollars, and yesterday he pay ten dollars, just so we do not lose our house," she said, slowly.

Heathcote smothered an imprecation as he saw the tears in her eyes. "That makes, in all, fifty-one dollars in four months."

"Yes, señor; it is a cruel mistake for your Government to make."

"It is, indeed, and I cannot tell you how sorry I am." His voice vibrated with sympathy, and Lola felt comforted by his assurance.

"You see, my mother is ill since my father died, and hard it is for her to be poor."

"I am so sorry," Heathcote repeated, as he rose to go. "I may come again to tell you about the Government?"

Lola held out her hand. "You are most kind, señor, and I thank you," she replied, simply.

So he came again the next afternoon to report the progress of the case and to bring some roses for her mother.

On his third visit he brought the pearls. "I am directed to return these to you, señorita, and to say that the Americans admire the Cuban women too much to make them suffer," he said, handing them to her.

Lola gazed from the case to him, and back to the case again, while tears of joy welled up into her eyes. "I begin to forgive the Government," she said, with a sob.

A flush rose to Heathcote's face.

As soon as her brother returned he must see him and straighten things out.

A pause followed, which Lola broke timidly. "You stay here much longer, señor?" she inquired.

"I don't want to go away, now, and when I do I want to take someone with me," he said, softly, and Lola lowered her eyes. She was beginning to understand.

Heathcote got up. "Don't you see how it is?—I love you, Dolores."

"No, no, it must not be!" she cried, putting up both hands to keep him away.

"Dolores, sweetheart, Lolita *mia!*" he was murmuring, all the love words rising to his tongue, when a laugh jarred upon his ears.

He looked up and saw a young man standing in the doorway.

"So this is the way you spend your afternoons? It is well I came home. *Infame!* letting an accursed American make love to you! *Desdichada!* you have disgraced us all!" cried Pepe, fiercely, in Spanish.

Lola sprang to her feet and faced him. "No, it is not true," she retorted, angrily. "I wanted to tell you when you came home this morning, but you would not listen; you were too busy," and then she launched rapidly into the story of her meeting with the representative of the American Government.

"So he comes to pay back the money unjustly taken from us?" repeated Pepe, slowly. Then a cunning light crept into his narrow eyes. "Lola, leave us; I will settle with this gentleman," he commanded. The girl obeyed silently.

Montalvo turned to Heathcote, who was greatly embarrassed by the scene. "My sister say, señor, you represent the American Government, and you will pay back the money it has taken from me," he said, in excellent English.

Heathcote did not answer; he was waiting for a cue.

"Are you prepared to pay one hundred, two hundred American dollars?"

Heathcote seized his opportunity. "Señor Montalvo, I love your sister—I would like to make her my wife. I met her trying to sell her pearls, to buy back some spoons her mother valued. Yes, I am ready to pay two hundred dollars, if you will promise that the American tax is not repeated."

Pepe shrugged his shoulders. "I cannot promise for your Government, señor," he answered, courteously.

"But I can."

"Vera well."

"And your sister?"

"If she love you, señor, I will not withhold my consent. You are rich, and you will not let her family starve." Pepe gave in gracefully. Evidently the American was sent by Providence to supply his needs.

"May I not see her?" Heathcote was insistent.

"I call her."

Lola came into the room shyly.

"You have explained all to Pepe? He is not angry?" she demanded, breathlessly.

Pepe sat down at the piano and strummed a *danza*. It would not be etiquette to leave the lovers alone, and yet he was willing to give Heathcote his chance.

"On the contrary, your brother was delighted; he even said he would offer no objection to my entering the family, if you were willing. Lola, can you learn to care—a little?"

His earnestness brought conviction to her heart, and, looking up into his blue eyes, she trusted him.

"I think I care now a—a little—" she murmured, and then his arms drew her to his breast.

Pepe was playing a *guaracha*.

"Dolores, you remember the first question I asked you in Spanish?" Heathcote lowered his voice.

"*Da-me un va-so de agua—*" she repeated, mischievously.

"Yes, I did not dare ask *da-me un beso*; may I now?" and as all the world over silence gives consent, Heathcote bent his head, and their lips met.

AT A WINDOW

I SEE without the restless crowd go by,
 Each with his little share of grief or bliss;
 Only a dreamer in the twilight I,
 Who sits alone where some great window is,
 And hears afar the city's restless cry
 And muses, "What have I to do with this?"

What is this world that wrangles, strives and cheats?
 Let me be glad I am no part thereof;
 Safe-housed above the tumult of the streets,
 Serenely unaware of hate or love.
 Outside the sun burns and the fierce rain beats
 There where the anxious, stern-faced toilers move.

Only a dreamer at the window I,
 Yet sometimes comes a mad, strange wish to go,
 Breaking all bounds, out 'neath the wide, free sky
 And join the tide that surges there below,
 To suffer, to rejoice, to fail, to try,
 To look full in the face of Life and know.

McCREA PICKERING.



TOO TECHNICAL

"HE thinks it necessary for a poet to know how to starve."
 "Yes, he attaches too much importance to the merely technical part
 of the business."



EXPLICIT ENOUGH

"HOW will you have your berth made up, madam?" asked the Pullman
 porter.
 "Head toward the engine and feet the other way," replied the lady,
 quietly, and idly wondered at the sudden mirth of the passengers across the
 aisle.

A MARTYR OF THE QUARTER

By Duffield Osborne

YOU did not know Marny? It was in the Rue Jean-Bart that he lived, up five flights of stairs, and he was an artist—yes, truly, an artist. It is only painters who are praised to-day. *He* did not paint a dead man so you would look again to discern the slab and the trickling water, and then name it an "Entombment" or a "Pieta." That is what *your* masters call "art," and you come all the way from America to study it under them—*tête de chien!* It is the soul that is art, not the body. Is Vérard a poet because his rhymes and his versifying are excellent? Poor Vérard! How they laugh at him at the Café Bleu!

Perhaps you remember a little work of this Marny. It was skied in the Salon of '93—a Psyche with butterfly wings, that mourned over a withered rose. No? Well, it is hardly surprising. One does not long remember those whom the world calls unsuccessful. Yet, believe me, there was once that fortune lay well within his grasp.

He had painted a study of Cécile—surely you recall how she was, before the life of the Quarter had made coarse the lines of her beauty? Well, the picture was bought by Joseph, the little dealer on the Quai Conti, and, as luck would have it, M. Rosenthal was passing one day and saw it in the shop window.

Perhaps you are not aware that M. Rosenthal knows a profitable work of art almost as well as he knows how to handle a national loan. He purchased the picture and obtained from Joseph the artist's name and address. Then he sent for Marny to call upon

him at his hotel in the Avenue Kléber. It was I that loaned my friend the coat which he wore to the interview, and, later, he told me what happened—thus:

He was ushered through many rooms—gorgeous, magnificent—till he came to one whence, through a door, he could see the banker at his desk. A young lady was just going out—very fat and very ugly.

"Bid M. Marny to be seated and wait," said the great man, when the artist had been announced.

Half an hour later he came forward, peering over his spectacles.

"You painted that head?" he asked, pointing to the picture of Cécile, where it lay upon a table.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Marny.

"I desire you to do a portrait of my daughter," pursued the banker. "It was she who was with me when you entered. What is your charge?"

Marny flushed and hesitated.

"Pardon, monsieur," he said at last, "but I fear it will be impossible for me to undertake the commission."

M. Rosenthal stared in amazement.

"But I will pay you five thousand francs," he said.

"The offer is generous; nevertheless——"

"Or, if you insist, and the work is satisfactory, I do not say but that——"

"A thousand pardons, monsieur. The amount you name is much more than I have ever received; but were it ten times increased, my answer would be the same. It is impossible."

"Might I beg you to favor me with

your reason for this most extraordinary refusal?" said Rosenthal, in tones of mingled wonder and sarcasm.

"Again pardon me. I should prefer not."

"But I insist—I demand——"

"In that case, monsieur, I can only comply, though, believe me, I do not desire to pain you. I have always held it the mission of Art to beautify, to ennoble life, and that, if she be true to her mission, Nature must, some day, become her handmaid. I am well assured that it was the high ideals of

Greek art that made of the Greeks a nation beautiful and noble and great, despite the smallness of their country and their numbers. I must live by my faith. Mademoiselle's portrait would be neither noble nor beautiful. I cannot paint it."

Pouf-f! You should have seen M. Rosenthal's face!

"Go! go!" he shrieked, as he caught his breath—"back to your attic and starve! *Cochon!*"

Ma foi! and I believe that is just what Marny did.



THE YELLOW GARDEN

IN a ring of emerald hills,
Where the sapphire of the skies
Overflows in lakes and rills,
There the yellow garden lies.
Every inch of fertile earth,
Every patch of teeming sod,
In the sun has given birth
To a spray of golden-rod.

There a square of cavalry
Fell in battle, sword and plume;
And their gorgeous ghosts you see
When the acre bursts in bloom.
Sorcery has worked a spell
As it did in days of old,
And has changed a common dell
To a field of cloth-of-gold.

MINNA IRVING.



INDISCRETION

"KERCHEW! Kerchew! Kerchew! Whew, I caught an awful cold at the picnic yesterday."

"Well, you *would* sit on the bare ground with nothing under you but a thin huckleberry pie!"

THE LOVE-MAKING OF LOO

By Kate Masterson

THE yellow newspaper girl had been given the most important assignment of her life. It had come from no less a personage than the managing editor, into whose office she had been called with extreme mystery and a careful closing of doors. The managing editor was not alone. In a chair beside his desk sat a gorgeous young woman, her gloved hands clasped about a gold, ruby-topped purse suspended from her neck by a heavy Roman chain.

Her gown was of tailor fashion, very tight and of pearl gray, and her hair was flaxen blond. The newspaper girl recognized the face and form at once as those of Miss Attallie Rosseau, the famous vaudeville artist, who had been imported from Paris at some fabulous figure to sing songs in broken French; although the fact was that Miss Rosseau had been born in New York's most populous tenement district. The broken French had been acquired, with other things, during a stay abroad.

"This, Miss Rosseau, is Miss Hartegan, our best woman writer, and, I may add, the cleverest detective in New York," said the managing editor. Miss Hartegan worked best when she was praised, and he wanted some of her best work now.

Miss Rosseau smiled, showing a row of too perfect teeth, in one of which a diamond was embedded, and Miss Hartegan nodded shortly.

"Of course you know of Miss Rosseau's breach of promise suit against young Mr. Warrington?" asked the managing editor, and Miss Hartegan nodded again. Young Mr. Warrington was a multi-millionaire, and the

Rosseau suit for a portion of his millions had occupied the larger part of the daily papers for a few weeks back. The *Daily Flyer*, which was Miss Hartegan's paper, was an acknowledged enemy of Warrington, and had been of his father before him, the feud involving the owners of the *Flyer* and certain railroad stock speculations, the paper carrying on the fight vindictively through its columns.

"Miss Rosseau," went on the editor, "will undoubtedly win the suit, which involves over a hundred thousand dollars, but there is one powerful factor missing in her case—in our case, I may say, for we have decided, as always, to take the side of injured womanhood against unscrupulous power and wealth."

The managing editor spoke as if he almost believed what he was saying. Miss Rosseau, overcome, applied a duchesse lace-edged square to her eyes, and Miss Hartegan looked blankly at both of them. She knew that the general opinion expressed by every paper except the *Flyer* was that the Rosseau suit was only the culmination of a blackmailing scheme, which had been successfully carried on ever since young Warrington awoke to the disenchantments of the siren who had woven her spell about him during his last year in college.

"This factor," continued the editor, "is a bundle of letters written by Warrington to Miss Rosseau from his first meeting with her——"

"And during our engagement," put in that lady, "until last January, when he abruptly and cruelly broke his many promises and left me——"

"Practically destitute," said the

editor, "with a large apartment on her hands and a few miserable dollars in the bank, and——"

"And all the linen and silver marked with his monogram," exclaimed Miss Rosseau, indignantly.

"Soon after," said the managing editor, "Warrington, when threatened with this suit, obtained from the lady, by subterfuge and deceit, this bundle of letters containing various offers of marriage and the most fervent expressions of love and devotion. Of course, it was highly imprudent for her to part with this package. With that in her possession the Warrington millions would have been practically at her disposal, for he would have done anything to avert the scandal, owing to his already announced engagement. Now, we want to get those letters."

"Of course he has destroyed them," said Miss Hartegan. She was feeling more thoroughly disgusted than ever with a profession that made any such calls as this upon her.

"No," returned the editor. "The fact is, he can't get at them. They are in a safe that he cannot open."

"And I have the key!" said Miss Rosseau, tapping her voluminous bosom significantly.

"It sounds like a melodrama," said Miss Hartegan.

"A woman's broken heart is more in the line of a tragedy," said the managing editor. He knew that Miss Hartegan was sentimental, in spite of her many skin-thickening journalistic achievements, but he did not know how thoroughly she saw through him.

"In the bedroom of Mr. Warrington's apartment in 'The Cloister,'" said Miss Rosseau, "which he only occupies when he is not on his yacht, there is an iron safe of curious foreign construction hidden behind one of the painted satin panels of the wall. It is a panel representing a 'Dreaming Venus'—a recumbent nude figure surrounded with roses and Cupids. The safe cannot be broken into in the usual way. Nothing could open it but dynamite, and owing to the massive construction of the walls of the

box a quantity would be required which would blow the entire house down. The box was made abroad for the safe keeping of the Warrington jewels, and the boy had it removed from the town house and placed in his flat. You can imagine what a wonderful piece of workmanship it is when you hear that it has been pronounced absolutely impregnable and superior to the usual bank safe deposit vaults. Warrington keeps the jewels and valuable papers there. You can imagine what uneasiness he must feel in the loss of the key."

"Which you obtained how?" asked Miss Hartegan. "How do you know the letters are still there?"

"Because I saw them placed there by Mr. Warrington, who closed and locked the safe in my presence, placing the key on a table while he turned to his desk in the next room to write—to write——"

"A check?" said Miss Hartegan.

"A check——" said Miss Rosseau, "a mere trifle in comparison to what was promised in the future. I slipped the key into my pocket. I knew that nothing could open the safe, with all its jewels, bonds and valuable papers, but that key. He had often told me so himself. The letters he tossed into a centre compartment which is lined with purple velvet. They were the only papers visible. The key, in the hands of a dishonest person, could be used for the purpose of robbery. As for me, I only want what is mine—those letters, which I should never have given up!"

Miss Hartegan looked at the two in dismay. "What do you wish me to do?" she asked. "I can't break into the man's house and steal them. You don't expect me to do that, do you?"

"The Cloister," said the editor, "is run on an admirable domestic system, which includes a corps of maids besides the usual hall boys, porters and pages. These maids are supposed to supply a pleasant feminine atmosphere to the *ménage*. Their duties are almost nominal. They dust bric-à-brac, arrange flowers, feed pets and give a

certain touch to the arrangements that imparts the charm that makes 'The Cloister' the highest-priced bachelor apartment house in town."

"You wish me to hire there as a servant?" asked Miss Hartegan, with some indignation.

"They are not ordinary servants," said the editor; "they must be highly recommended and introduced. They receive good wages and are intelligent, good-looking, refined. Their presence makes it possible for the residents of 'The Cloister' to entertain their women friends at luncheons and teas with perfect propriety and comfort for the ladies. Now, we propose giving you a letter to the manager of 'The Cloister' which will insure you a position. This will give you *entrée* to all the apartments. We will give you the key——"

"It's a case of absolute robbery," exclaimed Miss Hartegan. "Do you think he leaves a valuable safe of that sort unguarded when he knows the key is in someone's possession?"

"It's a case of doing your duty to the paper that has made you," said the editor, sharply. He knew that a stubborn sense of duty was one of Miss Hartegan's strong points. It had sent her climbing church steeples and down in diving suits to the bottom of the Bay when her physical dislike and fear of the task were as great as her moral qualms were now.

"And whether you succeed or not," went on the editor, as he watched Miss Hartegan's face, "you will receive the *Flyer's* check for a thousand dollars. If you succeed I need not say the reward will be liberal."

Attallie Rosseau untied a white ribbon somewhere in her corsage and took therefrom a saw-edged key to which the ribbon was attached. Miss Hartegan's mind worked quickly. Three years of journalistic success is bound to blunt not only the gentler attributes of femininity, but the promptings of ordinary morality. It was only another—and the worst—of the many scurvy tricks by which she had won fame and money.

She took the key and a liberal ex-

pense order and left the room, hating herself, and saying, as she had often said before, that this would be the last time. And each time her success was leading her deeper into the mire.

"The Cloister" was a great stone palace that had once been the home of a millionaire, then a club, and was now a bachelor apartment house, conducted on the most æsthetic plans. Its up-to-date service not only included a corps of intelligent maids, but had such luxuries as separate services of china, silver and glass. Famous chefs were employed. Fresh flowers were placed in the rooms daily. It was whispered that the controlling spirit of "The Cloister" was an ex-society woman, who, spurred on by the success of her plan, was now arranging for a family apartment house, with the same high prices and exquisite comfort and lack of responsibility.

When Grace Hartegan was installed as maid she voted it a most novel experience. She was provided with a black silk gown cut to the ankles, a daintily ruffled apron, a cap, and frills for neck and wrists that suggested comic opera. These quaintly costumed girls passing through the halls gave an inimitably picturesque aspect to the place.

When Miss Hartegan looked at herself in the cheval glass in the maids' sitting-room she had to confess that she never looked so well in her life. Her reddish-brown hair haloed her face under its white frill, and in her eyes the unholy fire of journalistic ambition had begun to shine.

Two days after she arrived she was sent to the Warrington apartment to distribute the violets which that young man preferred exclusively for his rooms. The latter were so superb that, as she entered, following the boy with the box, she stood gazing around her in such wide-eyed, transfixed admiration that she started violently when the Japanese man who had admitted them passed out of the room, looking like a prince of the Orient in his gorgeous robes.

The rooms were a veritable Al-

hambra, fitted with that magnificent disregard for expenditure and that mingling of artistic effects that so thoroughly mark the home of the typical American millionaire. The girl began to dispose of the flowers, the Jap bringing water in a silver pitcher.

He was the handsomest specimen of his race she had ever seen, and from the first he inspired her with awe. He was not small and sinewy, but tall, graceful—more like a native of India, although he wore the Japanese costume. He moved with the soft-stepping grace of the East. His eyes were dark, sombre and expressive, under heavy lashes. Miss Hartegan found herself staring at him, until he paused before her and parted his lips over white teeth to say: "Plitty gel," at which she laughed, as did the florist's boy. She wondered if he would be the only obstacle in her way and if he ever went out and left the place alone. She looked in vain for a door that might lead into the room containing the treasure.

With delicacy and simplicity she placed the flowers about; then she looked inquiringly at the Jap, who stood watching her in admiration.

"Other roomee?" she asked, pleasantly. He lifted a rose velvet curtain, and she passed into the sleeping-room of the most luxurious young man in town. It was all rose satin and painted panels. The bed was decorated with ivory, and lace hung. The vases were of silver. As she placed the flowers her quick eye swept the beautiful satin panels, each with its Venus differently posed and signed with the artist's name. Beside another door leading into a vista of white onyx and silver was the panel "The Dreaming Venus."

She started as a door slammed and a cheery, boyish voice sounded through the rooms. Peering out, she beheld, for the first time, Mr. Barclay Warrington—recognizing him from his published pictures, which, however, gave him a dignity he did not possess in the flesh. He looked and acted like an exuberant college boy. Miss

Hartegan had met a few millionaires in her work, but none like this one.

His hat was pushed back on his head over a face disposed to be unmannishly plump. There were puffed rings under the eyes, which were bright, young and happy. The lips were full, almost pouting, but a good chin just redeemed the face, which expressed thorough good nature with the world.

His clothes were distinctly loud. A tan box-coat was thrown back from a lurid English waistcoat. His shirt was striped in violet. And, strangest of all, he carried a common brown-paper bag, from which he contentedly ate peanuts.

A valet and the Jap attended his entrance, the man helping him off with his coat and the Jap standing like a sentinel—much more dignified and royal looking than his master.

"Hello, Loo," said Warrington, "have some peanuts? I've just been to the circus, and of all the damnedest—"

The Jap pointed to the rose curtain warningly.

"Plitty lil gel," he said.

"By Jove!" said Warrington, as Miss Hartegan passed through the room. "Sure enough! Lil gel, have some peanuts?"

Miss Hartegan blushed, bowed, smiled and went out with a trace of haughtiness in her manner. Evidently this was a delightfully unconventional household. She spent the rest of the day wondering if she could ever get up sufficient nerve to rob this remarkably good-natured young man. She felt that the Japanese might be won over through his evident admiration of her. But, somehow, she felt afraid of him. And, thinking, she fell asleep.

Next day she heard that her arrangement of the flowers had been praised by Mr. Warrington, and that he had asked that she place them each day. One of the other young women told her this meant at least fifty dollars additional each month as a tip from the young millionaire, who was a prince of generosity.

The Jap was always there, each day in a differently gorgeous costume. She knew that the things he wore, embroidered heavily as they were, must be worth a fortune. He wore queer turbaned head-dresses that were picturesque, but not Japanese.

"Finee! finee!" she said one day. "Loo, you look like a cozy corner." He smiled royally. It was only when he spoke in his ridiculous English that she could get rid of the idea that he was a nobleman. She found herself building romances about him. He appealed to her in some strange, mysterious way. She did not know if the influence were psychic or physical, but his glance thrilled her. His dog-like devotion, expressed in his anticipation of her wants as she worked, flattered her—more than she liked to realize. One day he gave her a rose.

"Plitty flowl for plitty gel," he said, his sad, mysterious eyes burning into her own. Miss Hartegan felt the blood surge to her cheeks. She swayed toward him as if she were going to faint, and he caught her in his arms and kissed her many times on her lips, murmuring unintelligible Japanese love in her ear, while she trembled helplessly. When she broke away from him and ran from the room in a rage she remembered that she must not forget to act her part. She realized grimly that she had kissed him twice. A Japanese servant! She wondered if he kissed all the maids.

She did not go to the apartment again that day, but sent to a shop for a book on physical magnetism and one on hypnotism. She was of an analytical turn of mind, and was going through an entirely new experience. Under her new name and in her cap and apron she did not mind it in the least. The blunting of her morality had gone farther than even she imagined.

Then she began to wonder if it would not be a good plan to have Loo on her side. He seemed to be always in his place. She must get the letters soon. Nearly a week had gone by now, resultless.

Next day she put a little dagger in the bosom of her gown. Loo bowed before her humbly with his pitcher of water for the flowers. She trembled and leaned upon the table, unaccountably weak, afraid. Loo's voice was in her ear:

"Me lovee you—lil gel. You mally me?"

She took the knife from her dress. "Killee! Killee!" she said, and, strangely enough, she was unconscious of the humor in her mode of expression. So was Loo. He moved away from this enraged young person with her crown of red hair and her blazing topaz eyes. Then she heard herself laugh. She went on arranging the violets. Loo's voice sounded from an inner room chanting a Japanese love dirge. Miss Hartegan listened.

She put some violets in a silver bowl on the dressing-table. Quickly moving her hand around the edge of the "Dreaming Venus" panel, she felt it move. Her heart began to bound. Then she heard a sigh at the rose curtain. Loo stood there, gazing at her idiotically.

"Lil gel—" he began.

"Oh, run away!" she said, and laughed, but her heart beat like a trip-hammer. Then a sudden impulse came over her. She would get Loo out of the place and secure the letters now. She went up to the Jap with alluring eyes. Again the strange fear of him made her tremble. She placed her hand on his arm.

"Loo, I love you!" she said, in a whisper.

He put his arm around her waist.

"You mally me?" he said.

"Some time."

"Me klissee you?"

"I thought Japs never kissed."

"I leln at collilge," he said.

She laughed into the eyes that devoured her. He bent his face close to hers. She drew back shaking.

"Once?" he pleaded.

"Loo," she said, "I will—but you must go out to the big shop with the red shades—you know—?"

He nodded.

"—and get me some chocolates."

He nodded with idiotic Japanese smiles, and said:

"And you klissee me?"

"Yes."

He vanished. She heard the elevator door click. She sank on her knees beside the panel. It swung back as if under a charm, disclosing the iron door beneath. She inserted the key bunglingly and turned it, pulling the door out. There lay the letters. She took them, closed the door and rose from her knees. What should she do with them?

Loo stood looking at her. The letters dropped from her hand.

"Did you get the candy?" she asked, imperiously.

"So you've done it?" said Loo, in capital English. "Burglary, with ten years in prison, for Miss Hartegan! Do you think it pays?"

He snapped a pair of handcuffs over her wrists. Then he took the key from the door of the safe.

"We wanted this," he said, "and these." He picked up the letters.

And looking into his eyes, accusing and reproachful, yet with just a trace of Loo's devotion in them, she realized that she, the clever Miss Hartegan, had been tricked by a cleverer detective, and for the first time in her life she fainted dead away.

When she came to her senses she found the steel handcuffs had been taken off, and Loo, with his queer head-dress removed, was bathing her forehead with violet water. There was an unprofessional tenderness in his touch. Barclay Warrington stood looking at them both, his hands in his pockets.

"Well, lil gel!" he said; "aren't you ashamed of yourself? What do you think we ought to do with you?"

"I don't care," said Miss Hartegan, beginning to cry. "I'm tired of the whole thing!" She began to sob more violently.

"Oh, say," said Warrington, "don't do that! Don't! If you promise to reform and—and apologize, and will never do it again, we'll let you off with a reprimand and give you over to——"

"My custody," said the detective.

The wedding of Detective Louis Burgoyne, the crack sleuth of a great private agency, and Miss Grace Hartegan, the newspaper girl, which occurred soon after that young lady's resignation from the *Flyer*, would not have occasioned so much talk had it not been for the fact that they started on a wedding tour in Barclay Warrington's steam yacht, the *Attallie*.



THE LITTLE NUN

PENSIVE, the Little Nun walks in the night,
Counting the yellow rosary of stars,
And asking of the moon what sweet delight
May lie beyond the peace of convent bars.

"I dreamed," she sighed, "that in a rosy bower
Lives one called Love, who, from his bluest eyes,
Can wink a tear that doth the world beflower,
As does the dewdrop from the Summer skies."

All pale, the Little Nun walks in the night,
Counting the yellow rosary of stars,
And sighing to the moon: "Some sweet delight
Must lie beyond the peace of convent bars!"

ANITA FITCH.

THE AUTHOR'S EVENING AT HOME

By Alice Dunbar

(Mrs. Paul Laurence Dunbar)

SCENE — *Library. Weather — Ninety in the shade.*

AUTHOR, *tired, nervous.*

WIFE, *fidgety.*

MOTHER.

SERVANT.

WIFE *discovered lying on lounge.*
AUTHOR *enters, and seats himself by her side.*

AUTHOR—Well, little girl, how are you?

WIFE—Oh, I am so sick!

AUTHOR—Let me go for a doctor.

WIFE—No, I don't need a doctor; I just have a headache.

AUTHOR—Well, lie quiet, dear.

WIFE—I don't want to lie quiet. (*Struggles to a sitting posture.*)

AUTHOR—Do you want to go out for a walk, dear? (*Kisses her.*)

WIFE (*crossly*)—No! (*Lies down again.*)

AUTHOR (*going to desk*)—Well, dear, I thought over that final chapter to-day, and I think I'll write it out.

WIFE—John!

AUTHOR—Yes, dear.

WIFE—You have kissed me only once.

AUTHOR (*dutifully rising and kissing her on her forehead*)—Poor little woman! (*Goes back to desk.*)

WIFE—John!

AUTHOR—Yes, dear.

WIFE—If you only knew how my head aches!

AUTHOR (*seating himself again on lounge*)—I can imagine, dear.

WIFE—Why don't you do something to amuse me?

AUTHOR—I, dear? What can I do?

WIFE (*petulantly*)—What have you

been doing to-day? You never tell me a thing.

AUTHOR—Well, I finished two chapters. Would you like to hear them, dear?

WIFE—Of course.

(AUTHOR *begins to read aloud.*)

WIFE—John!

AUTHOR—Yes, dear.

WIFE—Mrs. De Smythe was here to-day, and you have no idea how elegant she looked. She wore a gray satin suit trimmed with cut steel and gray chiffon, and her hat was a gray toque with violets.

AUTHOR—Have you finished, dear?

WIFE—Oh, yes; go on.

(AUTHOR *reads to end of chapter and looks to WIFE for approval.*)

WIFE—John!

AUTHOR—Yes, dear.

WIFE—Do you know that bald spot on your head has changed its form completely? Now it's almost a heart-shape.

(AUTHOR *says things under his breath and goes to his desk again.*)

WIFE (*pettishly*)—How cross you are!

(*Silence for thirty-three seconds.*
AUTHOR *writes industriously.* WIFE *sits up and begins to embroider.* Enter SERVANT.)

SERVANT—I've come for the breakfast order, mum.

WIFE—Oh, yes. Well, Mary, we'll have—let me see— John, would you like a mackerel to-morrow?

(AUTHOR *mutters unpublished things and grunts for reply.*)

WIFE—All right. Well, Mary, we'll have broiled mackerel and cakes, and—well, just anything.

SERVANT—Yes, mum. (*Exit.*)

(*Silence for twenty-six seconds. WIFE fidgets in her chair; drops scissors; hums one of Sousa's marches.*)

WIFE—John!

AUTHOR—Well?

WIFE—John, if England whips the Boers, it will change things about in Africa, won't it?

AUTHOR—Yes, I suppose so.

WIFE—John, where is the Boer country?

AUTHOR—Get an atlas and find out.

(*WIFE spends some noisy moments finding an atlas on the book shelves, drops a book on her foot and cries out.*)

AUTHOR *groans.*)

WIFE—John!

AUTHOR—Well?

WIFE—Come and see the map; here it is.

(*AUTHOR rises and seats himself beside her on the lounge.*)

WIFE—I don't understand what the Orange Free State is. Tell me.

(*AUTHOR explains tersely, shuts the atlas and goes back to his desk. Enter MOTHER; sighs, and sits in an arm-chair.*)

MOTHER—Oh, my, how warm it is!

AUTHOR—Let me open the window. (*Rises and opens window. WIFE resignedly puts on a shawl.*)

AUTHOR—Are you cold, dear?

WIFE—Oh, it makes no difference about me. (*AUTHOR goes back to desk with lines deepening on his face. MOTHER and WIFE converse in sibilant whispers.*)

AUTHOR—For heaven's sake!

WIFE—You're disturbing John,

mother. (*Exit into next room, where she can be heard moving about and humming the Sousa march.*)

MOTHER—Are you busy, dear?

AUTHOR—Oh, no; just amusing myself, trying to make some bread and butter.

MOTHER—I'm sorry to disturb you, dear, but then, you know, I just like to be about and see you at work. Of course, I sha'n't bother you at all. You can go right on. I sha'n't make a bit of noise or be in your way. I don't disturb you, do I?

AUTHOR—Oh, no, mother, not at all.

MOTHER—I thought not. You see, it's just as I was saying to-day to Mrs. Blackwell; when John comes home in the evening, Bess and I love to sit in the library while he writes, and watch him and learn repose by keeping still.

(*Enter WIFE on tiptoe; her shoes creak audibly. Goes to lounge, knocking against a chair on the way. Lies down with heavy sigh. Silence for three minutes, broken by the scratching of AUTHOR's pen and alternate sighs from WIFE and MOTHER. Bell rings.*)

WIFE—Mercy me, I hope it's no one to disturb John! (*Enter SERVANT.*)

SERVANT—Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright are in the parlor, mum, and Mrs. Cartwright says as how they've come over for a rubber of whist.

MOTHER—What a pity!

WIFE—Just as John was in such a good train of thought, too.

AUTHOR—Thank heavens!



TO MAIDENS

BUT believe what you please
 When they swear they adore you;
 Let them rest on their knees,
 But believe what you please—
 Let them argue and tease
 If the thing doesn't bore you,
 But believe what you please
 When they swear they adore you.

S. G. S.

THE GREATEST GOOD

By Gertrude Atherton

MORTON BLAINE returned to New York from his brief vacation to find awaiting him a frantic note from John Schuyler, the man nearer to him than any save himself, imploring him to "come at once." The appeal was supplemented with the usual intimation that the service was to be rendered to God rather than to man.

The note was twenty-four hours old. Blaine, without changing his traveling clothes, rang for a cab, and was driven rapidly up the Avenue. He was a man of science, not of enthusiasms, cold, unerring, brilliant; a superb intellectual machine, which never showed a fleck of rust, unremittingly polished and enlarged with every improvement. But for one man he cherished an abiding sympathy; to that man he hastened on the slightest summons, as he hastened now. They had been intimate in boyhood; then in later years through mutual respect for each other's high abilities and ambitions.

As the cab rolled over the asphalt of the Avenue, Blaine glanced idly at the stream of carriages returning from the Park, lifting his hat to many of the languid, elegant women. He owed his minor fame to his guardianship of fashionable nerves. He could calm hysteria with a pressure of his cool, flexible hand or a sudden modulation of his harsh voice. And women dreaded his wrath. There were those who averred that his eyes could smoke.

He leaned forward and raised his hat with sudden interest. She who returned his bow was as cold in her coloring as a Winter night, but possessed a strength of line and depth of

eye which suggested to the analyst her power to give the world a shock did Circumstance cease to run abreast of her. She was leaning back indolently in the open carriage, the sun slanting into her luminous skin and eyes, her face locked for the benefit of the chance observer, although she conversed with the faded individual at her side. As her eyes met those of the doctor her mouth convulsed suddenly, and a glance of mutual understanding passed between them. Then she raised her head with a defiant, almost reckless movement.

Blaine reached his friend's house in a moment. The man who had summoned him was walking aimlessly up and down his library. He was unshaven; his hair and his clothing were disordered. His face had the modern beauty of strength and intellect and passion and weakness. A flash of relief illuminated it as Blaine entered.

"She has been terrible!" he said. "Terrible! I have not had the courage to call in anyone else, and I am worn out. She is asleep now, and I got out of the room for a half-hour. The nurse is exhausted, too. Do stay to-night."

"I will stay. Let us go up stairs."

As they reached the second landing two handsome children romped across the hall and flung themselves upon their father.

"Where have you been?" they demanded. "Why do you shut yourself up on the third floor with mamma all the time? When will she get well?"

Schuyler kissed them and bade them return to the nursery.

"How long can I keep it from them?" he asked, bitterly. "What an

atmosphere for children—my children!—to grow up in!”

“If you would do as I wish, and send her where she belongs——”

“I shall not. She is my wife. Moreover, concealment would then be impossible.”

They had reached the third floor. He inserted a key in a door, hesitated a moment, then said, abruptly: “I saw in a paper that *she* has returned. Can it be possible?”

“I saw her on the Avenue a few moments ago.”

Was it the doctor's imagination, or did the goaded man at his side flash him a glance of appeal?

They entered a room whose doors and windows were muffled. The furniture was solid, too solid to be moved except by muscular arms. There were no mirrors or breakable articles of any sort.

On the bed lay a woman with ragged hair and sunken, yellow face, but even in her ruin indefinably elegant. Her parted lips were black and blistered within; her shapely, skinny hands clutched the quilt with the tenacious suggestion of the eagle—that long-lived, defiant bird. At the bedside sat a vigorous woman, the pallor of fatigue on her face.

The creature on the bed opened her eyes. They had once been what are vaguely known as fine eyes; now they looked like blots of ink on parchment.

“Give me a drink,” she said, feverishly. “Water! water! water!” she panted, and her tongue protruded slightly. Her husband turned away, his shoulders twitching. The nurse held a silver goblet to the woman's lips. She drank greedily, then scowled up at the doctor.

“You missed it,” she said. “I should be glad, for I hate you, only you give me more relief than they. They are afraid. They tried to fool me, the idiots! But they didn't try it twice. I bit.”

She laughed and threw her arms above her head. The loose sleeves of her gown fell back and disclosed arms speckled as if from an explosion of gunpowder.

“Just an ordinary morphine fiend,” thought the doctor. “And she is the wife of John Schuyler!”

An hour after dinner he told the husband and nurse to go to bed. For a while he read, the woman sleeping profoundly. The house was absolutely still, or seemed to be. Had pandemonium reigned he could hardly have heard an echo of it from this isolated room. The window was open, but looked upon roofs and back yards; no sound of carriage wheels rose to break the quiet. Despite the stillness the doctor had to strain his ear to catch the irregular breathing of the sick woman. He had a singular feeling, although the most unimaginative of men, that this third floor, containing only himself and this woman, had been sliced from the rest of the house and hung suspended in space, independent of natural laws. It was after the book had ceased to interest him that the idea shaped itself, born of another, as yet unacknowledged, skulking in the recesses of his brain. At length he laid aside the book, and going to the bed, looked down upon the woman, coldly, reflectively—exactly as he had often watched the quivering of an animal, dissected alive in the cause of science.

Studying this man's face, it was impossible to imagine it agitated by any passion except thirst for knowledge. The skin was as white as marble; the profile was straight and mathematical, the mouth a straight line, the chin as square as that of a chiseled Fate. The jaw was prominent, powerful, relentless. The eyes were deeply set and gray as polished steel. The large brow was luminous, very full—an index to the terrible intellect of the man.

As he looked down on the woman his thin nostrils twitched once and his lips compressed more firmly. Then he smiled. It was an odd, almost demoniacal smile.

“A physician,” he said, half-aloud, “has almost as much power as God. The idea strikes me that we are the personification of that useful symbol.”

He plunged his hands into his

pockets and walked up and down the long, thickly carpeted room.

"These are the facts in the case," he continued. "The one man I love and unequivocally respect is tied, hand and foot, to that unsexed, dehumanized morphine receptacle on the bed. She is hopeless. Every known specific has failed, *must* fail, for she loves the vice. He has one of the best brains of this day prolific of brains; a distressing capacity for affection, human to the core. At the age of forty-two, in the maturity of his mental powers, he carries with him a constant, sickening sense of humiliation; a proud man, he lives in daily fear of exposure and shame. At the age of forty-two, in the maturity of his manhood, he meets the woman who conquers his heart, his imagination, who compels his faith by making other women abhorrent to him, who allures and maddens with the certainty of her power to substantiate his ideal of her. He cannot marry her; that animal on the bed is capable of living for twenty years.

"So much for him. A girl of twenty-eight, whose wealth and brain and beauty, and that other something that has not yet been analyzed and labeled, have made her a social star; who has come to wonder, then to resent, then to yawn at the general vanity of life, is suddenly swept out of the calm orbit by a man's passion; and, with the swift-ness of decision natural to her, goes to Europe. She returns in less than three months. For these two people there is but one sequel. The second chapter will be written the first time they are alone. Then they will go to Europe. What will be the rest of the book?

"First, there will be an ugly and reverberating scandal. In the course of a year or two she will compel him to return in the interest of his career. She will not be able to remain; so proud a woman could not stand the position. Again he will go with her. In a word, my friend's career will be ruined. So many novelists and reporters have written the remaining

chapters of this sort of story that it is hardly worth while for me to go any farther.

"So much for them. Let us consider the other victims—the children. A morphine-mother in an asylum, a father in a strange land with a woman who is not his wife, the world cognizant of all the facts of the case. They grow up at odds with society. Result, they are morbid, warped, abnormal. In trite old English, their lives are ruined, as are all lives that have not had a fair chance."

He returned abruptly to the bedside. He laid his finger on the woman's pulse.

"No morphine to-night and she dies. A worthless wretch is sent where she belongs. Four people are saved."

His breast swelled. His gray eyes seemed literally to send forth smoke; they suggested some noiseless, deadly weapon of war. He exclaimed, aloud: "My God! what a power to lie in the hands of one man! I stand here the arbiter of five destinies. It is for *me* to say whether four people shall be happy or wretched, saved or ruined. I might say, with Nero, 'I am God!'" He laughed. "I am famed for my power to save where others have failed. I am famed in the comic weeklies for having ruined the business of more undertakers than any physician of my day. That has been my rôle, my professional pride. I have never felt so proud as now."

The woman, who had been moving restlessly for some time, twitched suddenly and uncontrollably. She opened her eyes.

"Give it to me—quick!" she demanded. Her voice, always querulous, was raucous; her eyes were wild.

"No," he said, deliberately, "you will have no more morphine; not a drop."

She stared at him incredulously, then laughed.

"Stop joking," she said, roughly. "Give it to me—quick—quick! I am very weak."

"No," he said.

Then, as he continued to hold her eyes, her own gradually expanded with terror. She raised herself on one arm.

"You mean that?" she asked.

"Yes."

He watched her critically. She would be interesting.

"You are going to cure me with drastic measures, since others have failed?"

"Possibly."

Her face contracted with hatred. She had been a rather clever woman, and she believed that he was going to experiment with her. But she had also been a strong-willed woman and used to command since babyhood.

"Give me that morphine," she said, imperiously. "If you don't I'll be dead before morning."

He stood imperturbable. She sprang from the bed and flung herself upon him, strong with anger and apprehension.

"Give it to me!" she screamed. "Give it to me!" And she strove to bite him.

He caught her by the shoulder and held her at arm's length. She writhed and struggled and cursed. Her oaths might have been learned in the gutter. She kicked at him and strove to reach him with her nails, clawing the air. She looked like a witch on a broomstick.

"What an exquisite bride she was!" he thought. "And what columns of rubbish have been printed about her and her entertainments!"

Meanwhile the woman was shrieking and struggling.

"Give it to me! You brute! You fiend! I always hated you! Give it to me! I am dying! I am dying! Help! Help!" But the walls were padded, and she knew it.

He permitted her to fling herself upon him, easily brushing aside her jumping fingers and snapping teeth. He knew that her agony was frightful. Her body was a network of hungry nerves. The diseased pulp of her brain had ejected every thought but one. She squirmed like an old

autumn leaf about to fall. Her ugly face became tragic. The words shot from her dry, contracted throat: "Give me the morphine! Give me the morphine!"

Suddenly realizing the immutability of the man in whose power she was, she sprang from him and ran frantically about the room, uttering harsh, bleat-like cries. She pulled open the drawers of a chest, rummaging among its harmless contents, gasping, quivering, bounding, as her tortured nerves commanded. When she had littered the floor with the contents of the chest she ran about, screaming hopelessly. The doctor shuddered, but thought of the four innocent people in her power and in his.

She fell in a heap on the floor, biting the carpet, striking out her arms aimlessly, tearing her nightgown into strips; then lay, quivering, a hideous, speckled, uncanny thing, who should have been embalmed and placed beside the Venus of Milo.

She raised herself on her hands and crawled along the carpet, casually at first, as a man stricken in the desert may, half-consciously, continue his search for water. Then the doctor, intently watching her, saw an expression of hope leap into her bulging eyes. She scrambled past him toward the washstand. Before he could divine her purpose, she had leaped upon a goblet inadvertently left there and had broken it on the marble. He reached her just in time to save her throat.

Then she looked up at him pitifully. "Give it to me!"

She pressed her knees to her breast. The red, burnt-out tear-ducts yawned. The tortured body stiffened and relaxed.

"Poor wretch!" he thought. "But what is the physical agony of a night to the mental anguish of a lifetime?"

"Once! once!" she gasped; "or kill me." Then, as he stood implacable, "Kill me! Kill me!"

He picked her up, put a fresh nightgown on her, and laid her on the bed. She remained as he placed her, too

weak to move, her eyes staring at the ceiling above the big four-posted bed.

He returned to his chair and looked at his watch. "She may live two hours," he thought. "Possibly three. It is only twelve. There is plenty of time."

The room grew as still as the mountain top whence he had that day returned. He attempted to read, but could not. The sense of supreme power filled his brain. He was the gigantic factor in the fates of four.

Then Circumstance, the outwardly wayward, the ruthlessly sequential, played him an ugly trick. His eyes, glancing idly about the room, were arrested by a big, old-fashioned rocking-chair. There was something familiar about it. Soon he remembered that it resembled one in which his mother used to sit. She had been an invalid, and the most sinless and unworldly woman he had ever known. He recalled, with a touch of the old impatience, how she had irritated his active, aspiring, essentially modern mind with her cast-iron precepts of right and wrong. Her conscience flagellated her, and she had striven to develop her son's to the goodly proportion of her own. As he was naturally a truthful and upright boy, he resented her homilies mightily. "Conscience," he once broke out impatiently, "has made more women bores, more men failures, than any ten vices in the rogues' calendar."

She had looked in pale horror, and taken refuge in an axiom: "Conscience makes cowards of us all."

He moved his head with involuntary pride. The greatest achievement of civilization was the triumph of the intellect over inherited impressions. Every normal man was conscientious by instinct, however he might outrage the sturdy little judge clinging tenaciously to his bench in the victim's brain. It was only when the brain grew big with knowledge and the will clasped it with fingers of steel that the little judge was throttled, then cast out.

Conscience. What was it like? The doctor had forgotten. He had never

committed a murder or a dishonorable act. Had the impulse of either been in him, his cleverness would have put it aside with a smile of scorn. He had never scrupled to thrust from his path whoever or whatever stood in his way, and had stridden on without a backward glance. His profession had involved many experiments that would have made quick havoc of even the ordinary man's conscience.

Conscience. An awkward guest for an unsuspected murderer; to the groundling whose heredity had not been conquered by brain. Fancy being pursued by the spectre of the victim!

The woman on the bed gave a start and groan that recalled him to the case in hand. He rose and walked quickly to her side. Her eyes were closed, her face was black with congested blood. He laid his finger on her pulse. It was feeble.

"It will not be long now," he thought.

He went toward his chair. He felt a sudden distaste for it, a desire for motion. He walked up and down the room rather more rapidly than before.

"If I were an ordinary man," he thought, "I suppose that tortured creature on the bed would haunt me to my death. Rot! A murderer I should be called if the facts were known, I suppose. Well, she is worse. Did I permit her to live she would make the living hell of four people."

The woman gave a sudden, awful cry, the cry of a lost soul shot into the night of eternity. The stillness had been so absolute, the cry broke that stillness so abruptly and so horribly, that the doctor, strong-brained, strong-nerved as he was, gave a violent start, and the sweat started from his body.

"I am a fool," he exclaimed, angrily, welcoming the sound of his voice; "but I wish to God it were day and there were sounds outside."

He strode hurriedly up and down the room, casting furtive glances at the bed. The night was quiet again, but still that cry rang through it and lashed his brain. He recalled the

theory that sound never dies. The waves of space had yielded this to him.

"Good God!" he thought. "Am I going to pieces? If I let this wretch, this criminal die I save four people. If I let her live I ruin their lives. The life of a man of brain and pride and heart; the life of a woman of beauty and intellect and honor; the lives of two children of unknown potentialities, for whom the world has now a warm heart. 'The greatest good to the greatest number'—the principle that governs civil law. Has not even the worthy individual been sacrificed to it again and again? Does it not hang the criminal dangerous to the community? And is that called murder? What am I at this moment but law epitomized? Shall I hesitate? My God, am I hesitating? Conscience—is it that? A superfluous instinct transmitted by my ancestors and coddled by a woman—is it that which has sprung from its grave, rattling its bones? 'Conscience makes'—oh, shame that I should succumb when so much is at stake—that I should hesitate when the welfare of four human beings trembles in the balance! 'Conscience'—that in the moment of my supreme power I should falter!"

He returned to the woman. He reached his finger toward her pulse, then hurriedly withdrew it and resumed his restless march.

"This is only a nightmare, born of the night and the horrible stillness. To-morrow in the world of men it will be forgotten, and I shall rejoice. But there will be recurring hours of stillness, of solitude. Will this night repeat itself? Will that thing on the bed haunt me? Will that cry shriek

in my ears? Oh, shame on my selfishness! What am I thinking of? To let that base, degraded wretch exist, that I may live peacefully with my conscience? To let four others go to their ruin, that I may escape a few hours of torment? That I—I—should come to this! 'The greatest good to the greatest number. The greatest' . . . 'Conscience makes cowards of us all!'"

To his unutterable self-contempt and terror, he found his will for once powerless to control the work of the generations that had preceded him. His iron jaw worked spasmodically, his gray eyes looked frozen. The marble pallor of his face was suffused with a tinge of green.

"I despise myself!" he exclaimed, with fierce emphasis. "I loathe myself! I will not yield! 'Conscience'—they shall be saved, and by me. 'The greatest'—I will maintain my intellectual supremacy—that, if nothing else. She shall die!"

He halted abruptly. Perhaps she was already dead. Then he could reach the door in a bound and run down stairs and out of the house. To be followed . . .

He ran to the bed. The woman still breathed faintly, her mouth was twisted into a sardonic and pertinent expression. His hand sought his pocket and brought forth a case. He opened it and stared at the hypodermic syringe. His trembling fingers closed about it and moved toward the woman. Then, with an effort so violent he fancied he could hear his tense muscles creak, he straightened himself and turned his back upon the bed. At the same moment he dropped the instrument to the floor and set his heel upon it.

HAD NEVER TOLD HER

THE WIFE—I came very near not marrying you, John.

THE HUSBAND—Yes, I know; but I had no idea you were on to the fact.

A LETTER TO PRUDENCE

New York, September 8, 1900.

DEAR PRUE: 'Twas in June, you remember,
We said *au revoir* at the train;
You promised the first of September
Should see you in Gotham again;
Then how can you hope for a pardon?
You're late by a week and a day—
We still may take in a roof-garden,
Or go to hear Kaltenborn play.

The crowd on the Avenue's taking
A look that's familiar once more;
The lively old town is awaking;
The shutters are down from the door.
One catches a glimpse of tanned faces,
That tell, quite as plainly as speech,
Of "green fields and running brook" places
And bright Summer days on the beach.

There's scarcely a thing to be told you—
Except that I wish you were here;
I'd give a king's price to behold you!
I *know* you've grown prettier, dear,
For don't you remember the season
You got such a tan at Cape May?
What a Summer that was!—that's the reason
I know it becomes you to-day.

Did you find time to read "Richard Carvel?"
The novel's turned into a play;
And, what's rather more of a marvel,
John Drew's to be *Richard*, they say.
'Twas "Rosemary"—can you forget it?—
That night that we went to see Drew;
The last act was "teary"—we let it
Make both of us wretchedly blue!

Dave Harum, who loved to trade horses,
Is soon to be acted by Crane,
And curly-haired "Favvy," of course, is
To tackle *Lord Algy* again.
What a *matinée* hero that man is!—
Gillette sticks to *Holmes*, I suppose,
And fair Mary Mannering's *Janice*
Should be quite as charming as *Rose*.

The Lintons took yesterday's liner—
 They'll visit each place on the map.
 Dick Chilton's enlisted for China—
 He hopes to get into a "scrap."
 I've a notion to go to Pekin or
 Cape Nome—would you care if I did?
 The Spencers are giving a dinner—
 I haven't come in for a "bid."

There's little that's truly exciting,
 You see, for my pen to set down;
 It's merely a line that I'm writing
 To ask when you're coming to town.
 The leaves in the Park have turned yellow,
 The Summer is over with, Prue;
 It's time you came home to a fellow
 Who's waiting and longing for you!

HENRY TALCOTT MILLS.



JUST WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR

"WHAT dat?" asked the big chief of the Ojibways, who was in Washington for the first time, as he indicated a fire-plug on the corner.
 "That," replied his guide, "is where we keep our fire-water."
 Then the red man wanted to get attached.



NOT FLATTERING

FATHER—What did your teacher say, Bobbie, when you told him I wrote your composition for you?
 BOBBIE—He wanted to know why you didn't get me to help you with it.



ALWAYS HARD

'HOW very cross and disagreeable she is! And it's less than two years ago that she was claiming to have been born again!"
 "Well, you know how trying the second Summer always is!"

AT THE SIXTH TEE

By Rupert Hughes

HOW such a foreordained duffer ever came to take up golf was the pet problem of the St. Niblick Club. It must have been simply his monumental masterfulness of will. He came East, he saw golf, and decided to conquer it. He had that instinct observable in certain men and other insects which impels the surmounting of every obstacle, by the hardest route, if necessary, rather than to go round, however primrose the path.

The very first week of his admission to the club he entered a tournament. He was given the largest handicap possible, but even after subtracting this from his total his score was the worst ever recorded in the history of the game. The card he had turned in was at first regarded with mere amusement by the other members. Later it was preserved and prized as one of the club's chief treasures. Visiting golfers were shown this card before the cups and trophies, and it always roused their risibles and made them feel at home.

Now, ridicule of the Duffer had two effects: it hurt his feelings and strengthened his determination. That first tournament was a crucifixion of his pride, but he stuck it out to the end. He felt now more than ever convinced that golf was a pastime only for idiots, but to quit a field of defeat with cheap raillery at the victor did not suit his ideals. So he met the laughter of the other members with a quiet grin of confession and a gentle admonition:

"Just wait and see; I'll beat the best of you yet!"

The Duffer noted that one girl on

the outskirts of the crowd about him was especially amused. He had seen her play past him with clean, long shots that mocked his own awkwardness pitilessly. He had noted how pretty she was, and had resolved to make her acquaintance. Now that he saw her laughing, his resolve took on immediateness. He asked a fellow-member of the club to introduce him, and this man, after obtaining permission, pronounced the banns of acquaintance.

"Miss Hamilton, let me present to you Mr. Wickham, Mr. Bernard Wickham."

Common decency compelled the Girl to try to keep from laughing in his face; common humanity forbade her complete success as she remembered the great clods of turf he had sent flying with his clubs and the puny distance the ball traveled, in spite of all his brawn. But when she laughed in spite of herself she saw that Wickham was laughing too, and quite heartily. The man who can laugh with the world when the world is laughing at him bids fair to conquer it.

The Girl liked the Duffer both for the fact and the manner of his laugh. She felt that he would be a very good fellow—away from the links.

When, a few moments later, the founder of the club, who was also the Girl's old Scottish father, strolled up, arm in arm with the Champion of the Club, who was also the Girl's devoted admirer, she introduced the Duffer to them. The Father held golf too sacred to be able to smile on a heathen, so he was blunt to the point of gruffness; the Champion held the Girl too

dear to be able to smile on any man she smiled on, so he was sarcastic to the verge of insult. Then the Girl, bitterly chagrined, saw the Duffer's smile tangle into a look of wrath that was hardly repressed. And, woman-like, she sympathized with him in his resentment.

If a man has stature and shoulders, a sense of the ridiculous and a quick temper, what more can a woman ask?

The Girl decided at once that the Duffer was worth while. She planned to ask him to call when she knew him better. He took care that the acquaintance should ripen, and before long he was asked to call. Which he did. Early and often.

The friendship of the two flourished so famously that Wickham grew rash enough to ask to play golf with her. Once more he had the indescribable humiliation of being beaten by a woman—such a slip of a girl, too!—and the one girl in the world to whom he would fain appear all-powerful, all-skilful. He could laugh at his first fozzles, but the mirth was soon a sorry cackle; glumness followed, and then that little insanity which is slangily designated as “the rattles.” He boiled with silent rage, and swallowed choking profanity till he had to give up the game in sheer distraction.

But the prestige he lost on the links he soon regained in other places. His devotion to the Girl was so marked that the whole club gossiped of it. Of course, the Girl herself was the first to see that he was very fond of her, but she was by no means the first in the club to see that she was also very fond of him.

When she happened on this secret nestling in a corner of her heart the Girl felt a deep distress; she saw many a hazard in such a course. For this simple game of golf, this mere pastime, had somehow gathered to itself a broad importance in her affairs. Of course, she herself could give it up forever with hardly a pang if it interfered with her heart's happiness. But there stood the Father and the Champion.

The Girl's father was an uncanny Scot. When he came to America he was *nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, which, if Dante had been, like Pilate, a Scotchman, would have been written in the equivalent for “at the ninth tee.” Having spent the first half of his life in an atmosphere as thick with golf as a Scotch mist, the Father—Gavin Hamilton, Esq., by name, a descendant, as he would always and soon inform a stranger, of the great friend of Bobbie Burrrrrns—I say, having spent the first half of his life at golf, Mr. Hamilton was fair pining away at the thought of spending the latter half as a golf-less exile in America.

Then that virulent microbe, the golf-club bacillus, got loose in America, and the infection caused the heart of the old Scot to rejoice mightily. He organized a club among his neighbors, and soon the whole region thereabout was as mad as *Ophelia*, and the dialect was altered with a rapidity that would have bleached a philologist's hair in a single night. To the old man's joy, his daughter Jean appeared to have inherited an aptitude for the game. To his complete delight, her chief companion was a young Edinburgher, James Creech, Esq., who had come to New York to represent a Scotch firm. Creech was a fellow of considerable address—particularly with a golf club—and the goodly income he earned was supplemented by a goodlier inheritance. He soon took the first place among the club's players. Best of all, in the old man's opinion, the friendship of the Girl and the Champion was not of the sort that finds gratification in moony tête-à-têtes; they were willing to spend hours with him in triangular conference on such vital questions as the best make and weight of clubs, the proper laying of a links, the nicety of greens, the elusiveness of bogey, the reasons why such and such shots were sliced or topped, and such like. Before long, under her father's tuition, the Girl became the champion among the clubwomen, and she and Jamie Creech won most of

the mixed foursomes. The old Scotchman looked forward to an Eden-like old age with a doting son-in-law and a pious daughter, both gifted in the game and the gossip thereof.

It is true that Jean and Creech were eternally wrangling, but they quarreled like a married couple; and, besides, the disagreements are almost the best part of the game to the doubly disputatious souls of the Dissenters from the Protestants.

It is true, too, that the Girl never felt a jot of actual love for the Champion. She had, indeed, once accidentally hit him a smashing blow with a driver, as he stood too near and caught the full force of her upswing on his forehead. She was bitterly sorry as she saw him faint at the sight of his own blood, and with deep solicitude she had emptied over his face the contents of the bucket of water set beside the tee for the purpose of wetting the sand, which vigorous measure brought him up spluttering. Thereafter the Girl had felt that she ought to love the man, for the womanish reason that she had hurt him; since she had given him a scar that he would carry to his grave, she felt that she ought also to give him her heart for the same destination.

But she could never make up her mind to accept him definitely, though he proposed to her almost every time they traveled the links together. She was content to let their relationship drift on as a sort of golf-betrothal.

And then the Duffer came along, and insisted on introducing a new discord into the blissful disagreement of the Triple Alliance. Her father and the Champion first despised him, because he could not play golf; then they learned to hate him, because the Girl took an interest in him. And by the same token, because they hated him, the Girl took a deeper interest in him. Their opposition waxed, and with it a feeling in the Girl's heart that seemed to her chiefly defiance, until one day she realized that the greater part of her emotion was not defiance for the golfers, but affection for the Duffer.

She had at first been surprised that a man could avoid talking of the game and still keep up an interesting conversation. The Duffer had both wit and experience as a storehouse for small-talk. After the ease and comfort of his Yale days he had ranched it in the West, and his accounts of bronco-busting and steer-roping, and all the obsolescent glory of the cow-puncher, fascinated her. When he told her of the terrors of a stampede or a prairie fire she was thrilled as by a melodrama. She was stirred to greater depths when he told her of the long agony of a day and a night in a blizzard, when the Arctic wind had the rush of a football eleven in a flying wedge, and the storm of snowflakes had the impact of a shrapnel of nettles. In the bitter chill and the blindness and the bewilderment the huge, snow-clad field of cattle had begun to drift like a Sargasso. He, the Duffer, was one of the cowboy sentinels. The others froze and perished, with hundreds of tormented cattle. He, somehow, weathered the thirty hours of tempest and lived to win the pity, and thence the love, of this girl.

Telling his adventures, the Duffer was like *Othello*, and he charmed the heart of *Desdemona* to forgetfulness of his alien golflessness. Finally, on an evening when her father was from home, she had been moved to tears by one of his stories of hardship and prairie loneliness. Before she realized it, as she kept her eyelids clenched tight to hold the tears in, she felt that he had caught her hand in his great grasp, and she heard him saying, very fervently:

"I could stand that life no longer. My ambitions for wealth and for human society dragged me back to the East. And now that I am here, I don't care for either any more. All I want now is one little girl for my chum."

Before he could tell her what he did not need to tell her—who that girl was—her father came bustling in. Seeing the Duffer there, he greeted him with all of a Scotchman's blunt-

ness and sat down with evident inclinations toward a freeze-out.

The Duffer saw the hopelessness of the situation, and rose to go. The Girl would have gone with him to the door to steal a last word, but the Father revealed an intention to stay by to the last, so she bade Wickham good-night, and when he, despairing of seeing her sooner otherwise, presumed to ask her to play golf with him the next morning, she consented, in spite of her pater's grunt of dissatisfaction, and remembrance of the fact that she had promised to go round the links with Creech.

When the Duffer had gone, she hastened up the stairs to avoid the scene that her father's aspect threatened. In her own room a new complexion came upon the affair. She felt that if she gave her heart and hand to this Duffer it would mean a serious breach with her father, the ruination of the home, the beginning of an eternal family rancor. So she actually rejoiced that her father had come in when he did and had saved her from herself; and she determined that the next time the Duffer resumed his proposal she would tell him, tenderly but finally, that he was disqualified in her tournament of love.

And sleep blessed the piety of her daughterly resolve.

The next morning, bright and early, the Duffer appeared at the club house determined to go round the links with the Girl if he had to be her caddie. Soon the Champion came and looked with undisguised ridicule at the Duffer and his golf rig. The Duffer felt a keen desire to wring Creech's neck, but possessed his soul in impatience till Jean appeared with her father.

Jean had intended to greet the Duffer with forbidding coolness, but he looked so braw in his blue sweater and his knickerbockers, and there was such an optimistic *bonhomie* about the early morning air, that she bent upon him a most cordial gaze. She decided that she would give him one last chance. If he could only learn

golf, the objection to her marrying him would disappear.

Being a woman, and having resolved upon a plan, she ignored the painfulness of the means to her end, and, with the mercilessness of the gentler sex, commanded Creech not only to relinquish his claim to be her opponent in the game, but even to coach his deadly rival! Creech was almost prostrated with rage, but she fastened such a despotic look on him that he acquiesced. Wickham was angry, too, because Creech insisted on tagging along. The Father accompanied them to the first tee, irate because his daughter had not ignored the Duffer; and Jean was the only one of them all that had a strain of morning music in her heart.

At the first tee Jean took the honor and led off with a neat and soaring drive. That warmed her father's heart back to her. Creech most grumpily offered to give the Duffer an object-lesson, and said, magnificently:

"Watch me drive, and do just as I do."

Whereupon he made a great flourish and swing, missed the grinning ball entirely and almost floated off his feet on the very whiff and wind of his stroke. The expression of amazement in his eyes was nearly audible as he prepared to redeem himself. This time he dug his club into the tee most ruinously, and the very knitting of his brows was profane. The third time he found the ball, but it stopped short even of Jean's drive.

The irony of the situation was too keen for laughter. It was high tragedy, and the Duffer was so unnerved that he quite forgot himself and his efforts at form; and, handling his club as if it were a baseball bat, somehow caught the ball smack and true, and sent it like a falcon clear to the putting green.

It would be hard to say which of the group—Duffer, Girl, Champion, Father or the caddies—felt the most amazement. Everybody knew that it was an accident, and yet none could resist the beauty of the drive. The Father,

before he thought of it, shook the Duffer by the hand, the Girl crowed with joy, and even the Champion started after the white hawk's flight in æsthetic homage. Then he returned to his senses and was madder than ever, and darted on ahead. The caddies hurried after him and the Father turned back to the club house to lose what remnant of a reputation for veracity his golf-stories had left him by recounting the Duffer's drive.

Jean and Wickham, when they came back to earth, found themselves alone. As they strolled slowly on, her praises led the Duffer to resume the proposal of the evening before, and he was just coaxing her heart away from its resolves when, for all their dawdling, they perforce overtook the fuming Creech. Jean found her golf ball in a beautiful brassie lie and sent it humming to the green. The fascination of a long, clean drive melted her heart still more to acquiescence in Wickham's pleading. And when he made a neat put, and holed out ahead of her, she was so glad of his superiority that she would have accepted him on the spot if Creech had not been at hand!

At the second tee Creech said, sneeringly:

"Go ahead, Wickham, and drive; you don't seem to need any coaching from me."

Whereupon Jean brought him to terms icily with a quiet:

"Well, then, you needn't trouble to go round the course with us."

To which he quickly answered:

"Oh, I don't mind. I'd like to see how well Wickham keeps up the gait."

That was the finger-thrust that broke the bubble of the Duffer's success, for, now that he had a responsibility upon him, he swished and whacked away dismally without being able to hit the ball at all for seven actual strokes. When he finally drove off he landed in a patch of tangled weeds, whence he escaped after three more shots only to find the ball against the post of a barbed wire fence. After four vain jabs at it, he whaled away

with a brassie, and though he knocked the ball a decent distance, his club splintered in two against the fence. He thought for the moment that he was "busting" broncos again, and his language was such that conversation was impossible for some time, in spite of his abject apologies.

The next two holes were played in bitter silence, Creech alone feeling cheerful. His manner was so offensive that his first remark was squelched sharply by the miserable Jean, who looked upon the despairing Duffer as a fallen and shattered idol, an irrevocable dream, a lost soul—or something hopelessly irredeemable. To Wickham, similarly, Jean was an escaped thrush, a pearl lost in the vinegar of fate, a will-o'-the-wisp never to be overtaken.

So the two stumbled along over the links in mutual resignation and regret, blaming the demon of Golf for their separation, and yet feeling powerless to exorcise him. Each wished to quit the harrowing play, and neither dared to make the first offer.

Wickham's fozzles grew more and more appalling until he passed the fifth hole. While a tee had been placed for women more advantageously, the sixth teeing ground for men was a little platform on the side of a steep hill. It was no bigger than a dinner table, and the rules of the course demanded a long drive across a strip of rough land and a winding gully, on to a fair green that seemed to the novice as far away as the fields of Elysium. The position and the necessity were such as gave even the veteran an anxious moment. The Duffer had an attack of positive stage fright.

Creech had suggested that he might better drive from the women's tee, for which Wickham would gladly have punched the Champion's nose. After three "fan shots," he sliced the ball far to the right; he decided to tee another ball, and managed to pull this equally far to the left; a third ball barely rolled over the edge of the teeing ground; a fourth reached just to the gully.

Jean's heart was burning with pity for the wretch on the rack, but Creech was childish with delight. He sat down on the fair green and pretended to go to sleep; he yawned; he called aloud cheap persiflage that was like pepper on the raw edges of Wickham's pride. Finally, after fifteen misses, the Duffer gave up, and going round to the flight of wooden steps, descended with the meekness of a whipped poodle and brought his giant's strength and his proud manhood to the depths of infamy; he teed a ball on the women's tee, and the hole—for which bogey was three—he finished in twenty-one shots.

"That ball's old enough to vote," chortled Creech, as Wickham stooped to take it out of the cup. Wickham said to his frantic soul, "Men have died for less!" but to Creech he said never a word.

It is curious how close our pastimes lie to our passions. We are most often more sensitive of our sportsmanship than of our intellects or our more serious virtues. Here were three people out for a little junket, and the ragged young man working in a near-by field stopped whistling to covet their luxury and their enjoyment, though one of the envied trio, the man in the scarlet sweater, was at best only happy with a malicious glee in a rival's misery; the rival in dark blue was humiliated to the point of suicide, and the girl in the brave pink coat was sorrowful to the brink of tears!

At the seventh tee, Jean, after making a fine far drive—though somewhat too much "heeled" for her liking—paused to say to the Duffer:

"You mustn't drive into that field on the right, you know. That's the field owned by the old brute that quarreled with the club." Then she hurried on with her caddie.

Being thus warned, the Duffer, of course, drove the ball straight into the forbidden field. Whereupon Creech giggled and informed Wickham that he lost the ball, the stroke and the distance. But Wickham's caddie, who, strangely enough, had a certain liking

for the Duffer, in spite of his bad play, sidled up and said:

"Say, boss, I'll git de ball fur ye. It's agin de rules for us fellers to go in de field, but de old man'll never know de difference."

Wickham, glad of even this little recognition of his right to live, acquiesced smilingly, and the urchin soon crawled through the fence and advanced a little way into the field, only to come flying out again and scramble through the barbs, regardless of their clutches.

"Geeminy-whiz, boss!" he howled, "dey's a real live bull in dere. I seen him! an' he seen me! an' he's bigger'n a house! De old man must 'a' put him dere to keep us kids out."

Creech grew very solemn suddenly, and said, "I hope that fence is strong."

But Wickham only smote the other ball he had teed. He foozled, as usual, and made a pathetically short drive. He hacked and scooped the ball doggedly along little by little. His temper was growing ugly now, and it only needed one more straw of sarcasm from Creech to break down his self-control. This the unwitting Creech speedily produced; and he was startled to see the meek and lowly Duffer turning on him with sudden fury.

"Look here, Creech, I may not be a big enough jackass to play this fool game, but there's one thing I can do, and that is, knock some of the insolence out of you. If you don't believe me, just make one more remark, and, by the Lord Harry! I won't leave enough of you to bait a mouse trap with."

Creech, enraged at this ultimatum, replied in kind, at the same time snatching an iron loft from Wickham's caddy-bag and brandishing it like a battle-axe.

Wickham, glancing over his shoulder, noted that Jean and her caddie were far away, busily hunting a lost ball, and he said to Creech:

"Come behind this bunker and we'll settle this little matter right now."

Since Creech seemed disposed to keep his club, Wickham selected another iron, a mashie. They went behind the high barrier of the artificial bunker, and the caddie followed, in all the romantic delight of a second in a duel.

After a little preliminary fencing, in which Creech acted on the defensive, not to say the evasive, Wickham, insane with battle-mania, was about to charge on him, parry the blow with one arm and send his club home with the other. Creech, alert to make the most of his one blow, saw a sudden horror in Wickham's eyes. His enemy stopped short and lowered his weapon. Creech, seizing the chance, brought down his club viciously. If Wickham had not thrust up his arm instinctively he would have brought away a broken head as his share of the combat he had begun.

Without heeding the pain of the bruise on his arm, Wickham, staring past Creech, muttered:

"Look behind you!"

"Oh, no," laughed the canny Scot; "you don't catch me off my guard so easily."

"Look behind you, I say," commanded Wickham.

"And what'll I see?" sneered Creech, suspiciously.

"You'll see the biggest and the maddest bull you ever saw," said Wickham.

Creech cast a quick glance over his shoulder and saw a monster whose engine-like energy and magnificence of power he was in no position to appreciate. The caddie had seen it while the two were fencing and had scuttled away to safety without hesitation, his yell of warning being unnoticed in the excitement of the duelists.

"What in the Lord's name can I do?" gasped Creech.

"Take off that damned red sweater, for the first thing," said Wickham.

As Creech was worming himself frantically out of it, he heard Wickham excitedly announce:

"He sees you; here he comes."

In the midst of his struggles Creech

felt the tug of a powerful hand, and as he came out of the tangle to daylight again, blinded and dizzy, he felt himself dragged along by Wickham, who got him to the other side of the bunker just as the low thunder of the bull's hoofs became audible.

Wickham peered over the top of the earthen parapet and announced, in a whisper:

"He's tearing your red sweater to shreds, trampling it and tossing it like mad."

"He'll come for us in a minute," moaned the terrified Creech. "And what'll we do?"

"That's the question," whispered Wickham, and he swept his eye around the broad field in whose very centre they were. In the distance he saw Jean, her eyes still fastened on the ground as she searched for the elusive ball. Then he exclaimed: "My God! there's Jean, and she has a pink coat on. Oh, you fools! you bright red fools! How can we get her out of this? If the bull sees her he can catch her long before she can reach the wall. What—what—what can we do?"

"Oh, she's beyond our help," whined Creech; "don't worry over her. What are *we* to do? Can we beat him off with these clubs, do you think?"

"Huh," grunted Wickham, "he'd think we were tickling him with a straw. I've got to warn Jean somehow." And he put up his hands to call to her; but Creech clapped his palm over his mouth, pleading:

"Don't, don't; he'll hear you and attack us."

Wickham shook him loose contemptuously and cried aloud Jean's name again and again, mentally cursing a word that had so little carrying power. She did not hear.

The bull did, however, and after a moment's sniffing wonderment, sauntered round the bunker. Creech, with a wail of terror, leaped up and straddled the parapet, prepared to take either side of it, as the bull's course might direct.

Wickham, seizing the opportunity

while the bull was puzzling over Creech, dodged round the end of the bunker and ran with all his speed, directing his course so that he might come as near as possible to Jean without losing the bunker as a shield from the bull's discovery. As he ran he kept calling Jean's name; finally she heard him, looked up, and, with all the stupidity of an innocent party to such a crisis, started toward him. He waved and stormed at her in vain.

After pondering the curious behavior of Creech, who was on the other side of the bunker, saying his prayers backward the while, the animal decided to go round after him, but suddenly he made out the red-jacketed girl upon his horizon. Whereupon he waxed wroth at the hated color and moved toward Jean with deliberate majesty, finally breaking into a trot preparatory to the final charge.

Creech, after waiting what seemed a long time for the bull to come and gore him to death, opened his eyes and saw the beast scampering away. Then he crawled cautiously to the ditch that traversed one part of the field, rolled over into it, and sneaked rapidly away along the muddy channel.

Wickham, glancing over his shoulder, saw Jean's immediate danger, and cried to her like Stentor to throw off her jacket. Without understanding why, she obeyed the authority in his voice, and whipping off the red coat, threw it to the ground.

"Now run! Run, for your life!"

And she did, aware only that some vague terror pursued both of them, and expecting to be overtaken by Wickham. But the bull ran, too, and losing sight of the coat in the grass, made after the fleeing girl at increased speed.

Jean's caddie had grasped the danger in a jiffy and had shinned up a near-by tree like a squirrel, concealing himself in the branches.

For a painful moment Wickham felt himself helpless to protect the girl. Then he turned and ran to cross

the bull's path. Without checking his speed he snatched up from the grass the red coat Jean had thrown down. Waving this wildly, he caught the eye of the bull, and the animal stopped short.

He stood stock still a moment pawing the ground, snorting in brutish annoyance. And confronting him was Wickham, the coat hanging from his limp hand, while he wondered what to do next; and wondered also if his heart was simply pounding a hole through his ribs or was making complete revolutions like a fly-wheel.

And now, to rob poor Wickham of even this little chance to gain his breath, Jean stopped running, looked about, saw the two adversaries, and decided that her place was at the side of the man she loved. So she started back toward Wickham, who, seeing her lovely lunacy, almost expired before the combined bravery and madness of her deed.

"If you'll only get out of the way, I'll escape, too!" he called, loudly. "Run!"

She obeyed after a second's mutiny, and turning, scampered for the wall. Just as Wickham blessed her for permitting him the last word for once, the bull charged him with leaps of tremendous momentum.

The only bull-fights he had ever seen were in kinetoscopes, but he bided his time and stepped expertly aside, while the bull dashed past like an express locomotive. Then he faced about and waited the next charge. The pauses grew shorter and shorter, and the bull's thick head grew more and more aware of the gadfly's tactics; but Wickham had time to regain his breath somewhat and to lay out a plan of battle, which was to zigzag his way gradually to the distant wall and then vault it quickly.

But, like many another battle plan, this failed to work in practice. The bull was not so naïve as Wickham hoped; he refused to make futile dashes always in straight lines; he began to follow up cautiously and make short lunges, harder and harder to avoid. He got between Wickham

and the wall, and the man could find no way to flank him.

Back and forth they wove, turning and twisting, both stumbling over the natural and artificial roughnesses of the field. Once Wickham slipped and fell, and managed only by a quick roll to escape the catapult of the bull's head. He threw the coat away once, but the bull paused only a moment to worry it.

In one of his agonizing dashes Wickham sought the bunker behind which he had left Creech, but the bull followed him round and round, till the man grew giddy and broke away at a tangent, his *fidus Achates* close after him. This brought him to the edge of a steep hill, which he surmounted with the utmost difficulty.

There Jean, running along the lee side of the wall, saw him from afar, outlined against the sky and reeling with fatigue. The pursuer now cut off every direction but one, and the Duffer had not the strength of mind to begin the dodging strategy again. So he jogged down to the sharp declivity over whose edge hung the sixth tee. When he got there he saw that he was now truly between the devil and the deep sea, and he cursed his stupidity drearily. The wooden stairway was the only safe way down, and the bull covered the approach to that. He was so utterly fagged and beaten that it occurred to him that it would be a happy way out of all his difficulties just to throw himself on the horns of the bull and be tossed into oblivion. So he faced about and called out, with sickly cheer:

"Come on, old boy; my jig's up. You win!"

But the bull only glared at him with red eyes, gloatingly, waiting to collect breath enough for a finishing assault. In this teasing pause a scheme occurred to Wickham. He began to taunt the bull with rude epithets and cheap banter, and flaunt the red flag at him defiantly.

After a moment of incredulous indignation the bull lowered his head to the charge and hurled himself down the incline.

Standing on the little table space, young Wickham waited for him with nerves and muscles taut and the red coat held just in front of his feet. If he stepped aside half a second too soon, the bull would turn and catch him and carry him over the cliff; if he paused half a second too long—

He did neither. At the very nick of the opportunity he leaped away, and the horns of the bull tore the coat from his hands as the great engine of rage plunged past him and crashed on the rocks below like a falling oak.

Wickham almost followed, but managed to save himself. One look showed that the bull had broken his bones and was dead on the instant.

Now, all the props of courage fell from under Wickham, and he sank down on the teeing ground in a limp heap. He flopped over on his back and rested. Just rested.

So Jean, after seeing the climax of the adventure from a distance, found the Duffer, supine, informal, toes up, arms out, and smiling foolishly and happily. She knelt down at his side and laid her hand on his hot forehead; but he was too tired to speak—to more than bestow upon her a grateful glance.

After a time she thought she saw a movement in the bushes at the edge of the gully beneath. Then she saw the scared face of Jamie Creech peer out. She called to him with arch raillery that it was safe to appear now. And he scrambled up to daylight, muddy and begrimed and soaked to the knees. His first words were:

"Where's that beast of a bull?"

She simply pointed to the silent mass, whence all the wrath was flown, and added:

"You'd better run along home and change your shoes, or you'll catch cold."

Creech, from where he stood, could not see the form of the oblivious Wickham. To his eyes Jean was simply a sardonic little witch perched aloft to tantalize him. But he obeyed her directions and wearily plodded his homeward way.

Suddenly Wickham came out of his stupor of blissful weariness. He rose to his feet and helped her to hers. He was about to begin anew his protestations of idolatry, but she said, hastily:

"Hush! here come some people."

Vague rumors of the adventure had, indeed, spread among such golfers as were about so early in the morning, and a flock of club members, having learned that all danger was past, hastened to the scene of the conflict. Jean's father was among

them, and he came forward on seeing her to ask, anxiously:

"What's the matter, my child? What has happened?"

"Oh, nothing," she sang out, cheerfully, "only Bernard—I mean Mr. Wickham—has just broken all records for a drive from the sixth tee."

The old man did not quite understand, but he beamed upon the Duffer with sudden cordiality, shook both his hands violently, and exclaimed:

"I congratulate you, my boy! You'll be a true golfer yet."



GREAT-GRANDMAMMA

OUT of your oval frame upon the wall,
Great-grandmamma, how pensively you gaze!
Dressed as you were when going to a ball
In other days.

How pink your cheeks! How soft your curly hair!
Those rosy lips were never meant for sighs;
Your laughing eyes are blue—a charming pair—
Like Summer skies.

Your brows are arched. You have a Grecian nose.
And oh, how very gracefully you stand
Upon those marble steps, a crimson rose
Within your hand.

Of course, I would not even dare suggest
That you were not as lovely as you seem.
Still, artists (sometimes) put one at one's best,
And I've a dream

That on *my* portrait, too (please do not tell),
Posterity some day a glance may fling,
And point *me* out a Beauty and a Belle.
How *comforting*!

LILLI HUGER SMITH.



GLORIOUS PROSPECTS

MRS. WORLDLY—Yes, my dear, he is handsome; but what are his prospects for the future?

LOVESICK DAUGHTER (*gushingly*)—Why, mamma, he is an evangelist!

THE RESEMBLANCE THAT CAME BETWEEN

By Jessie Llewellyn

THEY had sailed together over blue seas. Their acquaintance was just ten days old. She was bright, good-looking and on the comfortable side of thirty. He was not a bad sort and he knew how to say things.

She had never thought it would result seriously, but somehow, as they leaned over the deck-rail one blue night, gazing up at the golden Pleiades, while the wind tapped his shaven cheek with her blowing locks, she found herself saying "yes." They exchanged "always" and "nevers" and looked out over the starlit water, their hearts surcharged with sea-voyage sentimentality.

One by one the other passengers returned to their cabins, and the hour grew late.

"I really must go below," she murmured. For answer he pressed her hand and looked into her face with a hurt expression.

"They'll talk—those women."

"What can they say but that a queen was kind to her slave? To think our parting must be so soon! But you have promised. You must let my gift be our mascot until I can run up to your windy city and bring you back to God's country, mine for keeps."

"Yes," she sighed, looking, oh, so in love, and then again, lingeringly, "Yes."

The inevitable lovers' silence followed, which, of course, the woman was the first to break.

"You have not told me what it is—this mascot."

"To-morrow morning. Come up on deck early before all of these

stupid people are out. Let us see the sun rise together—an emblem, you know. Good-night, sweet—early, remember."

"Good-night, dear—early."

About ten o'clock the next day, the twain, looking rather sleepy, met at the appointed place. The world was not all shimmer and sweetness in the morning glare, but they stood the test. He was holding an oblong, neatly wrapped package, and managed to touch her hand gently in handing it to her. She took it shyly and hastened back to her cabin.

Eagerly tearing off the wrappings, she suddenly emitted a shrill little scream. A small green alligator wriggled and squirmed under a glass lid. It lifted its head and looked at her, and she gazed back, fascinated.

A sense of familiarity dawned upon her slowly, as she stood with the box in hand. Where had she seen that expression before?—the narrow eyes, looking up at her, and the peculiar motion of the long head.

"Ugh!" she shuddered, placing the box gingerly on her bunk. Nervously snatching up a book, she threw herself on the lounge. She felt a growing resentment against the man who dared choose such an offering—and for love, forsooth!—and yet he had meant the harmless green creature to be only a souvenir of the country they had both visited.

"Something live," he had said, with characteristic ardor, "that you will care for and cherish as I hope my love may be cherished."

"A trifle sentimental," she said aloud. "But these languorous, insinuating Southern men!"

"Languorous!" "insinuating!"—the words recalled the alligator.

She sprang toward the box and looked again searchingly at the small prisoner.

"It is true, it is true," she gasped; "the thing is the image of—of *him*."

The luncheon call sounded through the ship. Hurriedly straightening her rebellious hair, and putting a touch of white on her flushed cheeks, she started for the saloon. In the corridor she met him. He raised his head and slowly shook back his hair, looking into her face with his narrow eyes. No one was about, and he extended his hand to take hers.

Then suddenly the imagined likeness to the reptile overwhelmed her with disgust, though inwardly she could only laugh at herself, at him, and at the poor, unoffending alligator. The situation was ridiculous. He looked after her with surprise as she muttered an excuse and hurried past.

The passengers laughingly commented on the disconsolate figure of the man as he paced the deck alone or sat in a corner apart for the rest of the day. A severe headache kept the young woman in her stateroom.

They landed the next morning, and a bevy of friends met the girl. Only a glance and a word had the man been able to throw her at parting, but it was understood he was to call at her friend's home, where she would remain a few days before resuming her journey.

One evening soon after, she sat with her friend before a grate fire in the girl's room, and her face was stained with tears of vexation.

"He demands an explanation," she was saying.

"What can you tell him?" insisted the friend. "You promised, you know, and now you won't even see him."

"There's the bell—oh, my dear, it is he. No, I can't, I won't see him. Go down, like a good, sensible girl, and tell him."

"Tell him what?" gasped her friend.

"How do I know? This horrible resemblance has got on my nerves; it makes me half-crazy to look at him—the eyes identical, the twist of the head just the same. Oh, please go; there comes the maid with his card. Go!"

The friend, fairly pushed out of the room, found herself standing embarrassed before the tall Southerner in the library below.

"She still refuses to see me?" he asked, haughtily, while the girl twisted her small lace handkerchief in an agony of confusion.

He looked steadily, compellingly at her with his narrow eyes. "You know all," he said, slowly. "Why has she conceived this sudden dislike of me? Why?"

"Because she—she——"

"What?" His eyes commanded her.

"She thinks you look like the alligator," blurted the friend, and fled ignominiously up the stairs, leaving the man alone.

With a short laugh he went over to the long mirror and stood for a minute regarding himself, then he grimly let himself out.

"He who can understand a woman—" he began, and he walked down the street, whistling softly and perplexedly.



COULDN'T HELP IT

MILLY—Why did Abou ben Adhem's name head the list?

BILLY—I suppose the names were arranged alphabetically.

THE UNLUCKY SHILLING

By Barry Pain

IF you are a newsvender and tobacconist in a small way of business you will, in all probability, be addicted to the backing of horses. There are no published statistics on the point, and I confess I do not know why it should be so, but so I have found it in my experience.

Mr. William Crall, who had a small shop in the neighborhood of the Euston Road, was an interesting instance of this combination. He was an energetic and conversational little man, rather proud that the cut-price people had not touched him; he had a strong personal connection—customers with whom he was on friendly terms, customers to whom the social charm of Mr. William Crall meant more than the saving of a farthing on the ounce. In spite of the fact that he frequently made a bet, there were many vices that Crall did not possess. There are, I believe, many men who put an occasional half-crown on a horse that yet would think twice about murdering their mothers; and there are a few gratuitous reformers about who would do well to remember the fact.

Mr. Crall might even have laid claim to a few humble virtues. Above his shop lived two old ladies, his aunts, who owed to their nephew the life of leisure that they devoted entirely to good works and to disapproving of their nephew. It was due to this latter propensity, perhaps, that Mr. Crall found the society of the shop preferable to that of the upstairs parlor. It was a comfortable looking, old-fashioned, dingy little shop, with quaint jars for the mixtures, that had secrets in their composition known only to Mr. Crall;

and it was further served by a boy whose moral and intellectual shortcomings were Mr. Crall's eternal despair. Mr. Crall's manner ranged upward from stern severity in dealing with the boy, through formal politeness in supplying the wants of casual visitors, to complete affability in converse with old customers.

Among those who regularly frequented the shop was a young gentleman whose visiting card (printed while he waited) correctly described him as Mr. Ferdinand Hammer. His air of partial elegance was rather marked. In him the formalities of fashion were gently tempered by a touch of romance and the exigencies of a small income. The character of the large pearl in the necktie was distinctly impugned by the paper cuff-protectors; the frock-coat was admirable but for the slight shininess under the forearm; the pattern of the waistcoat was exuberant, and suggested a personality breaking away from a convention; the black hair was unduly hyacinthine. As a rule, he looked in twice a week at the tobacconist's for an ounce of No. 3. This was the mildest of the three mixtures compounded and sold by Mr. Crall. It was believed by Mr. Crall that the boy was addicted to stealing this mixture, and he frequently expressed a wish that he might catch him at it.

On a Saturday evening, in the Summer, Mr. Crall, with his waistcoat undone, was standing in his doorway, instilling confidence into the general public by smoking one of his own full-flavored Manilas, when to him entered Mr. Ferdinand Hammer,

"Good evening, sir," said Crall, with cordiality, backing into his shop and behind his counter. "And how is the world treating you, Misterrammer?"

Mr. Hammer took a seat on a cask and said that he must not complain, though undoubtedly the weather kept hot. He had a flower in his buttonhole and appeared jauntier than usual.

"Don't happen to have heard anything?" asked Crall.

"I did hear South Wind mentioned for the Cup, if you fancy a long-priced one. It's at twenties, I believe. They were speaking of it over at the Capital."

"Ah! And there's other attractions over at the Capital, so I'm told."

"They draw a very fair glass of bitter," said Hammer, with a very poor assumption of indifference.

"They do, when Missammond ain't too busy talking to attend to you. It was all I could do to get served the other night."

"Miss Hammond is a lady that I respect, and I should say that her class was altogether above her work; she was born to a very different style of life. All the same, I've never heard anyone complain that she didn't do her duty before."

"That's only my chaff," said Crall. "Don't take things as they ain't meant, Misterrammer. We all know as you're a prime favorite in that quarter."

"People know more things about you than you know yourself, seems to me," said Hammer, with an air of ripe but saddened experience.

The conversation lingered a little longer on the fascinating subject of the barmaid at the Capital, and then strayed back to racing again. Mr. Crall gave it as his opinion that South Wind would be worth backing on the day if the wind really was from the South then.

"Now, Mr. Crall," said Hammer, with superiority, "that's simply superstition, and nothing else."

"Call it what you like; I'm sure I

don't care. But it's good enough for me to go by, anyhow. There's feelings as you can trust, though you can't argue about them. A stranger came here Tuesday and asked me for a packet tobacco that I don't stock. I sold him some of one of my own instead, and he put down a shilling. As soon as I saw that coin I knew it was an unlucky one. There was nothing particular about it to look at; so far as that went, it was just like any other shilling. The man that gave it to me was as ordinary as you could wish, too. But all the same, I felt the bad luck all through that shilling and all over it. I laughed at myself for the idea, but I couldn't get rid of it; so I put the coin in my waistcoat pocket instead of the till, and decided to keep it twenty-four hours and see what happened. That's a fair test, Misterrammer, ain't it? Well, since then one of my best regular customers has died, a man that owed me two ten has gone bankrupt, a horse I had backed ran absolute last, and that damned boy has broken another gas-globe. You can't get away from that, can you? I don't sleep to-night until I have passed that coin on to someone else."

"For a sensible business man you surprise me," said Mr. Hammer. "All that would have happened just the same if you had never seen the shilling. The coin has nothing to do with it."

"If you think that, perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me change for it," said Crall, drawing his shilling from his pocket.

"Certainly," said Hammer, and did so.

Then other customers came in, and Mr. Ferdinand Hammer slipped the suspected coin into his ticket pocket, picked up his ounce of No. 3 and went out. For the time being Hammer thought no more of the absurd superstition of his tobacconist, his heart being very full of that golden-haired lady, Miss Hammond. The first syllable in their respective surnames seemed in itself to be a link between them. Hammer seldom, if

ever, made use of his ticket pocket. But his transaction with Mr. Crall was bound to be brought to his recollection sooner or later, for the simple reason that a clerk on thirty shillings a week cannot put a shilling aside without feeling that it has been put.

He turned almost instinctively to the bar where for inadequate salary Miss Amaryllis Hammond consented to lend the charm of her existence, coupled with a good deal of hard work. Ferdinand Hammer was not an intemperate man, and his very moderate thirst had already been supplied that night, but a further and prolonged conversation with Miss Hammond seemed to him imperative. This impatience, for he had arranged to take her for a walk in Regent's Park on the following morning, shows the depth and reality of Mr. Hammer's feelings, and demands our sympathy.

Amaryllis—which is a beautiful name—was very busy when Ferdinand entered. Smiles fluttered over her face, and she danced from one customer to another, rattling out the absolutely correct change, hearing and carrying out many complicated orders, and yet finding time to make the retort demanded by etiquette to each of her admirers.

"No time to talk to you to-night, Mr. Johnson. This is our busy night, you know. . . . Sovereign? Five's nine's, one's ten's, ten's twenty, thank you, sir. . . . In one minute. Do have a little patience or you'll make me cross. . . . Scotch yours? . . . Yes, and you'd have a high color, too, if you worked as hard as I do. . . . Three bitters; right. And a small Bass? Thank you. . . . I *am* sorry about that cork; they do fly so funny. . . . See you at Buckingham Palace next time I'm calling there. . . . Eightpence halfpenny and three-and-a-half's a shilling. . . . Yes, I've spoke to our boss myself about them lemons. . . . Gin-and-ginger? Right."

A temporary lull came at last, and Ferdinand stepped forward. At the

other end of the counter an oldish gentleman still lingered. He had a shiny hat, a large watch-chain, a fat cigar, a glass of port, and other signs of opulence. Miss Hammond was leaning over the counter and speaking to him in a subdued tone of voice. Ferdinand wondered why the old fool couldn't see that he was *de trop* and move off. And then, to his surprise, he heard the old fool, who did not take the trouble to lower his voice, say: "All right; go and give the young man what he wants, my dear, and then come back."

Miss Hammond accordingly turned her attention to Ferdinand, and she did not seem by any means pleased to see him.

"Thought we'd finished with you for one evening," she said. "What's it to be?"

Ferdinand was wounded. "A glass of stout and bitter, if you're sure you've got the time to draw it," he answered, with marked sarcasm.

She handed it to him without a word, and the weak-kneed Ferdinand instantly repented. "Sorry I let my temper get the better of me," he said. "That old fool the other end of the counter's a bit on my nerves, you see."

Miss Hammond observed that it was no consequence. She was going to St. Paul's on Sunday morning with the gentleman at the other end of the counter; he was an old friend of her family, and she did not care to stay and hear him insulted. If Mr. Hammer would take her advice he would let that be his last drink for the night.

Mr. Hammer made voluble attempts to explain further, but Miss Hammond declined to hear him. She strolled humming in a leisurely and indifferent way to the other end, and leaning over the counter, resumed her conversation with the old friend of the family. What she said to him must have amused him, for he went into a roar of genial laughter. The very horrid thought flashed across Ferdinand's mind that possibly he might be the subject of their mirth. If he had been quite certain of that he

would have made a row about it, he would, indeed; he would have made it dashed unpleasant for that old fool. But the old fool was not very old, and had a look of being quite able to take care of himself; also, Ferdinand could not be quite sure that the offense had been committed. Perhaps he took the wiser course in finishing his drink and walking out.

He walked fast, with the sense of all the wrongs that he had suffered burning in his head. Miss Hammond had forsaken him, broken her word to him with regard to Sunday, joined with his rival in turning him to contempt, and insulted him by the perfectly unfounded suggestion that he had been drinking to excess. He felt murderous; he pined and panted to have a row with somebody. A minute later fate indulged his needs in this respect—indulged them, as he felt afterward, almost too freely.

He was crossing the road, and paying, perhaps, too little attention to what he was doing, when he and a bicycle and a bicyclist became instantaneously mixed up in a heap in the road. The accident had happened in all its beautiful completeness before Ferdinand had even had the time to see that it might happen. He was not seriously injured, but he acquired a variety of minor hurts; he was bruised and sore; his hands were cut and bleeding; his hat was accordion pleated; his clothes were damaged and muddy. As he struggled to his feet he was collared at once by a second cyclist.

"Got yer!" said the second cyclist, a man with red hair and a bullet head. "I saw yer myself put your stick in his spokes to throw him over, and now yer'll have to pay for it. Yer've 'ad it pretty stiff already, and yer going to get it stiffer now. Yer taller-faced monkey, I'd like to take yer on myself. Jest yer attempt ter stir afore the copper gits yer nime and address and I'll brike yer 'ead off."

The first cyclist, who had now arisen from the road, came forward and also took a hand. He was bleeding from the nose, and he was also sarcastic—a

combination that some less gifted men might have found difficult. He said that for his part he was glad it had happened. He had heard that there was that type of blackguard about, but he had not believed it; he was pleased to see a specimen. It was not, in his opinion, much of a specimen to look at, but he was a collector of curiosities and thankful for what he had got. He asked politely from the crowd if a photographer was present.

And then the policeman came up and made a fourth at the little whist-party. He took every name and address within reach impartially. He moved the crowd on. He also expressed it as his impartial and unofficial view that it was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, and altogether behaved as a model policeman should.

Mr. Ferdinand Hammer made his way home to his boarding-house with pain and emotion. The maid who let him in looked at him curiously and watched him suspiciously as he climbed lamely up the stairs. He went straight to his own room; there he contemplated the wreckage of his clothing with despair in his heart. After a little decision he concluded that it would brush off better when it was dry, and feeling that active life was beyond him, crept into bed and went to sleep. In the morning the wreck of what had once been tailoring looked even worse than it had the night before. With a hard brush, a sponge and a needle and thread he did his best. The hat he gave up—with the air of one who faces the situation—as hopeless. Then he descended to breakfast, and was a little surprised to see that he was treated by the ladies of the establishment with a marked coldness. The reason dawned on him afterward when the proprietress requested the pleasure of a few moments' conversation with him.

She knew, so she informed him, what young men were. At the same time there were limits. Doubtless he knew better than she did what state he had come home in the night before. She did not wish to allude to it, and

of course she only knew what she had been told. But she had to say, and she was sure he could not blame her, that if anything of the sort happened again she would have to ask him to find rooms elsewhere. Yes, certainly; she quite believed that it was the accident of being run down by a bicycle that accounted for his coming home with his clothes in that state and climbing up the stairs by holding on to the banisters; she believed it, and she would do her best to get the other ladies to believe it. But as a Christian woman she felt it her duty to say that if he found it growing on him at all he would do far better to take the blue ribbon at once; which, in her opinion, was no disgrace and the only manly thing to do.

It was hard on Ferdinand Hammer, and he protested with all the spirit that was not yet crushed out of him. But he seemed to be cursed with an unhappiness in dialectics, and—as is so often with the absolutely innocent—his protests did not carry conviction with them. How could they, when he declared in one breath that he had never been drunk in his life—which was perfectly true—and in the next that he was prepared to make up a drinking match with any man in the house for a pound a side, to see which could stand most—a bet which he would most certainly have lost?

After that interview with the proprietress he felt absolutely broken and only anxious to get away somewhere beyond the ken of man—Margate, for instance. Margate was too much for his finances, but there was no reason why he should not get a day in the country. He returned to his room to select a pair of suitable and yellow boots, and incidentally gave a little attention to the frock-coat that he had worn the night before. As he was handling it, a shilling rolled out of the ticket pocket, and suddenly Mr. Ferdinand Hammer remembered.

The convert is ever the most enthusiastic believer, and if Mr. Hammer had been slow to recognize the mystical properties of the unlucky shilling he believed in them now with a faith

that would have made Crall's superstition seem almost like rationalism. At the same time he became very angry with Crall, the cause of all this misery. He opened the window to hurl the shilling forth, then checked himself, and not from motives of economy. It was Crall who had, through the medium of that cursed shilling, alienated the love of Miss Hammond, caused him to be run down by a bicycle, and put him in a position that had been misunderstood and forfeited him the respect of the establishment where he lived. Crall should suffer for it. The tobacconist did not open on Sunday—his aunts objected to it—but on Monday there would be a chance to return him his shilling privily; in all probability he would not recognize it; and the unluckiness of that shilling would descend on Crall once more. Ferdinand's spirits returned at the thought, and he went forth in quest of the country with quite a jaunty air.

It did not desert him until he had reached the booking office, taken his return for Epping Forest neighborhood, and then discovered that he had come out without his purse. After that he gave it up. He went home at once, with the sarcasms of the booking clerk ringing in his ears, and incontinently and unusually, considering the time of the day, went to bed again. He had an instinctive feeling that he was safer there than anywhere else. He lay there and tried to imagine the many and horrible misfortunes that were in store for Crall when the shilling was once more in his possession. Hammer's only fear was that Crall might once more have the instinctive warning and refuse to take it. He did little sums, too, in his head, to calculate how much in hard cash the unlucky shilling had cost him. And from this his thoughts, naturally enough, turned to another and more serious loss—to the sudden and abominable defection of Miss Hammond.

He recalled that Miss Hammond had told him she might have married long ago, but that she preferred

her independence then; she had mentioned that it was a gentleman rather older than herself and possessed of considerable means. Could she have been speaking the truth? The idea had never occurred to him before. Could it be that the once rejected had returned and that this time Miss Hammond was less devoted to her independence? His train of thought was broken by a tap at the door. "What is it?" he called.

A voice from the other side of the door said that Mrs. Arch—that was the name of the proprietress—had sent to know if he felt any better, and would he like a cup of tea and a little dry toast?

Then he recognized the position. By going to bed he had provided further and almost undisputable proof of his intemperance the night before. Nothing that he could say would carry conviction with it now. He hated changes, but he felt that his only course was to find another boarding-house. Exiled from home, deserted by love, damaged in reputation, lamed and shaken, with a ruined wardrobe and a prospect of having to pay for the repairs to the bicycle that had ruined it, Ferdinand Hammer felt that never again would he disbelieve in any sort or kind of superstition. The lesson had been sharp and severe, and he made up his mind to profit by it.

At nine o'clock on the following morning Mr. William Crall, having been exasperated by the two old ladies, his aunts, at whom he was unable to swear, was having a few words with the boy, with whom no such restriction existed. If the boy could not come at the right time in the morning he need not come at all. He would be no loss. Mr. Crall was assured that he could get six boys in ten minutes by putting his head out of the window and whistling for them, at half the wages that he was now paying, and worth double the money. The boy had all Sunday with nothing to do, and there was no call for him to go on doing it on Monday morning when he ought to be at work. If he

couldn't move those shutters just a very little bit faster he might get a clip on the side of the head that would hurry him to some purpose.

And then Mr. Crall suddenly dropped the dictatorial manner and changed to the utmost geniality, for an old customer, Mr. Hammer, to wit, entered. "This is an unexpected pleasure, Misterrammer, and so early in the morning, too. Run through that little lot already?"

"No," said Hammer. "The fact is that I was walking part of the way into the city this morning, and I found myself out of lights. Just give me a box, will you?" He put a carefully selected shilling down on the counter.

"Not got a copper, I suppose?" asked Crall, glancing into his till.

"Afraid not," said Ferdinand. Could it be that Crall suspected the true nature of the shilling that had been offered him? His next words dispelled the fear.

"It's all right," he said, handing out sixpence and five pennies. "Only I happen to be rather short of coppers this morning. It would be no matter if I had anybody except that good-for-nothing young blackguard that I could send for change. Trust him with a sixpence and you'll never see it again! I wish you could persuade your people in the city to take him. I'd part with him, and give him a character, too. I'd give him a character for being as lazy, dirty, stupid and dishonest as any two other boys in the kingdom put together."

All this was said in the full hearing of the boy. Hammer expected that under this series of insults the boy would get cheeky and leave. He was also well aware that this would be a nuisance to Mr. Crall, in spite of his assertions to the contrary. If the boy threw down his work and went, that would mean that the unlucky shilling was already getting to work on Mr. Crall, and that would be a comforting thought for Hammer during his day in the city.

But the boy went on with his work, absolutely unperturbed, polishing the

brass and humming under his breath that there was only one girl in the world for him. He was used to these little compliments by now.

Ferdinand was disappointed; but his faith in the unluckiness of the shilling was strong, and he turned to leave the shop, with a conviction that there was still misery in store for Mr. Crall.

"One moment before you go," said Mr. Crall. "You know what I said about that unlucky shilling the other day?"

"Yes," said Hammer. "You gave it to me."

"Begging your pardon, Misterrammer, that's just what I didn't do. I meant to get you to change it, but the shilling that I changed was not the unlucky shilling at all. The day be-

ing hot, I put on a different waistcoat, and that happened to have a shilling in the pocket as well, and the whole thing slipped my memory—but there, you see?"

Mr. Hammer said that he saw.

"As for the real unlucky shilling," Mr. Crall continued, "one of my old ladies up stairs wanted a subscription to the missionaries, and I thought that was a good chance to work it off. Perhaps it will change its character in a good cause."

Mr. Ferdinand Hammer said that perhaps it would, and went out. He is going to read a paper on senseless superstitions next week at a small literary society of which he is a member. The same date has been fixed for the marriage of Miss Hammond to an old friend of her family.



AD INFINITUM

THERE lies a legend buried in old Rome
 That yearly, on a fated Summer night,
 The world of stone awakes to life and sight,
 And all the lonely statues leave their home
 In archway cold or vine-hung pagan dome,
 And wander where they will until the light.
 Eros, green-clad in shining malachite,
 Gay fauns and satyrs from still fountains' loam,
 Dance down the darkness, bearing branches tall,
 And pause to listen while Apollo plays
 Upon his broken lyre wild, ancient lays
 Of love and war and merry bacchanal;
 And underneath the ilex's drooping shade
 Two marbles lean together, man and maid.

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



OUTCLASSED

GIBBS—They say that Punchem, the prize-fighter, was defeated in an encounter last night.

BIBBS—By whom?

GIBBS—Why, he doesn't know. He intended to have a match with the Awful Kid, but by some mistake he called up one of the telephone girls.

THE STORK AND THE BABE

THE STORK—Well, are you ready?

THE BABE—I suppose so. (*Yawns.*) Let 'er go; but it's all such a dreadful bore.

STORK—What?

BABE—This going into a new and unfamiliar household; forming new family ties and having to be kissed.

STORK—The family relations may be delightful.

BABE—They may; but one never knows—there is the uncertainty. By the way, where are you going to take me?

STORK—There is a new family in the Bronx—

BABE—The Bronx? Horrors!

STORK—Then I have on my list an application from a Fifth avenue family.

BABE—That's better. Are they exclusive?

STORK—Semi. They want a girl.

BABE—But I am not a girl.

STORK—Sure enough; I had forgotten.

BABE—Those who have come back tell me people in the world do not always get what they want.

STORK—When they do not they kick.

BABE—Let 'em. If this family in Fifth avenue is respectable, I can see no reason why I should not incorporate myself as one of the household. Are there other kids?

STORK—Seven.

BABE—Jiminy! Grown up?

STORK—All but one; she's a girl, and ten.

BABE—Fancy!

STORK—Yes, it's ten years since their family physician called on me; I was quite shocked when I received this last order.

BABE—Naturally; but one can never tell.

STORK—No. But here we are. You might yell a bit, just to show you have arrived.

BABE—All right, here goes! You don't think you'll come back?

STORK—I should hope not.

BABE—Say, I'm glad I'm not twins.

STORK—Probably your new pa will be glad, too. You'd better yell once more while I ring the door-bell. Hope you'll like your new place. So long.



GOOD FOR EVIL

WHEN an Englishman his *Hs* drops
 Our sensitive ear it vexes;
 But when a Yankee in London stops
 He drops his *Vs* and his *Xs*.

DOROTHY DORR.

THE TWO IDEALS

By Charlton Castlemane

“H AVE you an ideal?” said the girl.

She did not ask an idle question; she often speculated on ideal matters; he had just been describing the heroine of his new book.

“What is your ideal like?” pursued the girl.

“Dark eyes and a merry laugh,” answered the man.

“Pooh! You are evading me. Gracious! That wave nearly washed over the yacht. I wish the moon would come out a little more. Mr. Desmaines, please put these gloves in your pocket.”

She did not say any more, and after a while Desmaines began, in low tones:

“The girl that I should like to marry——”

“I did not ask you to marry her,” she said.

“No, Miss Ethlaine, but if I ever met such a one I could conceive of no happier thing than that she should be my wife. She should be bright, sufficiently so to discover the humor of any situation. She need not be pretty. She must have good teeth. She should be original and clever, but not given to a profession. Her wit should be quite catholic. She must be steady in her character. Dark, of course; splendid eyes and hair, but these are attributes possible without amazing beauty.”

She had listened intently, curiously. When he finished she was disappointed. She had expected from Desmaines a superb description—and she had heard the desire of a man of taste. Some passionate longing for a creature supremely fascinating she

hoped possessed the gifted Desmaines—instead, she found a quiet philosophy, existing without decisive expectations.

Presently she said, petulantly:

“Athletic and rich, for me.”

Desmaines looked up in pained surprise. He put his hands around his knees and moved slightly. He was physically slender and moderately built financially. She possessed a dashing manner, and was inclined to be flippant.

“May you obtain him!” he answered, heartily, as if responding to a sarcastic litany.

“My ideal,” she said, putting her hand on his motionless arm and looking up at the moon, “my ideal,” she repeated, “is a man with immense strength of will; having tremendous pride of family, but never bearing it in on a single creature. He must be boyish looking, with a gentle mouth and serious eyes. His hair should be black as mine. I wish him to be born to fortune.”

“Would you marry such a man?”

“I said marrying was not a condition,” she answered, smiling.

“You will never find him.”

“Nor you her.”

“You see the ideals are worthless,” interjected Desmaines.

“No; the ideal gives color to my own life.”

“And mine leads on to the creation of perfect characters.”

“Mine is the complement of my existence.”

“And mine the supplement of my endeavor.”

“And if it is ever realized I shall understand heaven.”

"If mine is ever realized I shall live all my stories."

"Do you know, Desmaines, that what we speak of are but real dreams?"

"Certainly; and we shall never clothe them in flesh, . . . Elaine."

"Then they are practically lost, are they not?"

"Not yours," he said. "I desire a woman who possesses an ideal."

"Nor yours," she whispered. "I wish a man who has one."

He kissed her in the light of the moon.



THE WAY OF A FOOL

MY heart, he is a minstrel gay,
A foolish, wayward fellow;
I bid him sing of gold—forsooth,
He sings of tresses yellow.

I bid him make a roundelay
On wealthy Grace's graces;
He seeks instead a byway dark,
And after Phyllis chases.

I dress him up in rich brocade,
He slings his harp behind him,
And off he goes—and soon enough,
Alack! in rags I find him.

No word of wisdom will he heed,
Nor learning will he borrow;
He'll play the arrant fool to-day
And be as bad to-morrow.

For Phyllis flouts him to his face
In most ungentle fashion,
While lovely Grace would fain, I think,
Accept less ardent passion.

Ho! ho! my heart—my minstrel knave,
You are a foolish fellow
To scoff at gold—yet love a maid
Because her locks are yellow!

Y. B. DAPOE.



THE ONLY POSSIBLE PLACE

JONES—Have a good time on your vacation?

SMITH—Yes, indeed. I found a place where you didn't hear a word about golf or yachts or automobiles.

JONES—Great Scott! What were you jailed for?

A MILLIONTH GIRL

By Jeannette Scott Benton

BETTY had come back. The impatient tinkle of the doorbell, the swift swish of skirts in the hall, the sudden breeze of the clear, insistent young voice, proclaimed the fact as unmistakably as a herald and a brass band.

She "Oh'd" and "Ah'd" and fluttered in the old familiar way. I knew the instant I saw her, though, she had something on her mind. Finally, she tucked herself into a comfortable chair and regarded me anxiously.

"I have something to tell you," she murmured, in a suppressed voice. "I am sick now with keeping it. I could hardly wait until I got to you. You're such a regular darling old tomb, you know. You remember Miss Bryce, don't you?"

"Miss Bryce? Let me see— Oh, yes, she was the girl who visited you last Winter with Adah Gray. I remember her very well."

"Ah—yes—you remember. Well, what did you think of her?"

For the life of me I could not recollect what I thought, or if I thought anything.

"She seemed a very pleasant girl—rather plain," I ventured.

"Ye-es, of course I expected you to say that. You know I met her at Adah's last Winter and invited both the girls home with me. Adah never said much about her beyond the fact that her people were very nice. Of course, I knew that, or Adah would not have had her. I hesitated a little about inviting her. I was afraid Joe and George would consider her rather a bore; she wasn't their style of girl at all—sort of quiet and steady, you

know. Not a bit of 'go' in her. Adah is such a darling, though. The boys think she's great fun, so I thought they would not mind about Rachel.

"When she came the boys both remarked, 'She isn't much for looks,' and Joe wanted to know if I expected them to trot her around much. But, do you know, before they left—they were here three weeks—Joe began to act the funniest. He didn't joke and flirt with her any; couldn't if he had wanted to, for that matter; but took a 'my lady, the queen' sort of air with her quite indescribable. It seemed so funny for Joe! He's always so jolly and larky with the girls.

"I was in the library one evening just before they left. She and Joe came into the back parlor together and stood by the fire. Pretty soon Joe said:

"'Miss Rachel, I can't let you go forever with this little acquaintance. I must know you better. Life has seemed a finer, more genuine thing to me these last three weeks, but my lesson is too short. I need more.'

"I never heard Joe sound so earnest. It wasn't love-making; honestly, it seemed something a bit better. She was silent a moment, then she said slowly, as if she were thinking—by the way, her voice is quite wonderful. I always thought if I was a man I'd fall in love with it, it is so rich and trained. Oh, yes—well, she said:

"'No one ever said so beautiful a thing to me, Mr. Manning, and I thank you for it.'

"Then I thought she never would go on. Finally she did.

"'I do not think it need be forever. I, too, would rather it should not—'

"I slipped out then. I didn't want to be eavesdropping.

"I told mamma about it, and she said she thought 'that was pretty broad. She probably considers Joe a good catch.'

"They corresponded; I knew that because I used to see letters with the Germantown postmark on them.

"Well, you know Adah was married this June and I went to the wedding. I was first bridesmaid and Rachel maid of honor. Adah said to me, just before she left:

"'Betty, dear, I think Rachel will invite you to her home for a little visit. I hope you will accept. It will please Rachel, and you can easily afford that much from your Summer.'

"'I don't know,' I answered. 'I think she rather fancies Joe, and I don't want to encourage her. She's awfully dear and good, of course, but then you know Joe could do better.'

"Adah looked at me, then she laughed. 'I don't believe your going will encourage her one bit,' she giggled.

"It struck me she acted a bit queer, but I didn't say anything. Well, Rachel did ask me, and I said yes, if she would be my guest in Chicago for two or three days.

"I made up my mind I would give that girl a real jolly, chocolate cream, *matinée* sort of time for once in her life. So we went to the Auditorium—they know papa so well, and he sent them a letter, so they were lovely to us. I hired a carriage and took her about the city and showed her all the swell residences. We went to some roof gardens, too—don't you ever tell anybody that, though—and had a big time. She seemed to enjoy it, too, and got real jolly.

"When we went on to Germantown I made up my mind I didn't care how plainly they lived, I'd have a good time just for Rachel's sake. There was no one but her father and mother, you know, and I had an idea she helped out the family income some, though she never said a word about it.

"When we arrived at Germantown I commenced gathering up our little

traps, but Rachel said: 'Never mind, Betty, dear, they will be attended to. John, her keys are in the small valise.'

"I looked up into the face of a gold-braided individual, who touched his cap and said 'Yes, ma'am,' with an English accent, and I followed him meekly to a carriage, which, I give you my word, was the most elegant thing in that line I ever saw. Silver chains, pneumatic tires, coachman, footman and horses pretty enough for angels.

"After quite a drive we stopped in front of a house—a palace, rather—positively, there isn't a thing in Chicago can touch it. Immense grounds, with fountains, a little lake and terraces. The house itself was simply a dream.

"A man in livery opened the door. 'Mrs. Bryce's compliments, and she will be in soon,' he said.

"Rachel turned to me. Some way there was an air about her I had never seen before; a sort of 'the queen has come to her own,' you know.

"'Your maid will show you to your rooms, dear. I know you are tired. I will be up soon myself.'

"I wasn't tired, but I was speechless, so I followed a starched-up young person to a suite of the 'latest thing in decorative art' rooms. My trunks were there. The starched-up young person had them open preparatory to going through them. Say, it's an awful thing to have your most sacred economies pass under the cold, calculating eye of a person like that!

"I was completely crushed. To think of my trying to give a good time to a girl like that! It made me feel hot all over.

"Rachel came in in a few minutes. You know when I think anything I can't keep it, so I jumped up and burst right out:

"'Oh, Rachel, how could you deceive me so? To think of my trying to show up things to *you*! What must you think of me? I shall die of shame.'

"She pushed me back in the chair and knelt down beside me.

"'I think,' she answered, 'you are

the dearest girl in all the world. I don't believe anyone ever tried to make just *me* happy before. I told Adah not to say anything. I had a fancy to see how it would seem to stand on my own merits instead of papa's millions. If I had been a pretty girl it would have been different, I suppose. My merits have not made a dazzling social success of me. It has even been a bit humiliating at times. But the friends I have made—oh, my dear! and her head went down into my lap. The back of her neck even was a bit red, and I said to myself, 'I'll telegraph Joe.'

"Then—oh, my goodness!—'Don't let anyone know,' she whispered, with her face still hidden, 'not *anyone*! I was foolish to have you come here—yet.' She said that 'way under her breath. 'But I wanted you so.' 'Oh!' I thought, 'near the rose.'

"That was June. This is September. Joe is still writing her some kind of letters, but they are not engaged, and mamma—I believe she would suppress even those letters if she could—says, 'Joe is not a bit like himself. Doesn't care to go out. Know he could marry Carrie Newton if he would only make an effort, and she has fully twenty thousand in her own right.' Oh, my, twenty thousand!"

"Do you mean to say you haven't said a word to any of them?" I ejaculated.

"Of course not!" She looked at me in astonishment. "Don't you know I promised I wouldn't?"

"I had no idea there was so much to you," I murmured, in astonishment.

"I am going," Betty announced, abruptly. "Now I have told you, I think I can exist without nervous prostration a while longer."

She turned to the door, then came back:

"I am sure Joe is thinking he can't afford to marry. She isn't the sort of girl, you know, who makes a fellow do anything reckless on her account. Mamma says, 'It's an ill wind that blows no good. If Joe does marry

her she is just the kind of girl to make a good cook and housekeeper.' My princess of the golden halo—think of it!"

The next day a small hurricane precipitated itself into the room.

"Oh," it said, breathlessly, "look at that!" and a square missive fell into my lap. I opened it. It was very much to the point:

DARLING BETTY:

You are a girl in a million. I must see you. I am going to California next week. My route will lie through Chicago.

With sincerest love,

RACHEL BRYCE.

Betty sat down, supporting her chin on her rosy palm, and regarded me with roguish eyes.

"The invitation has gone—went on the next train. Mamma says, 'I suppose there's no way out of it, but in my opinion it's pretty bald.' Mamma can see through a stone wall, when proper provision is made for it, as well as I can. Only our points of view are different."

She got up and stretched a little.

"Oh, me! What a relief it is! I breathe again."

"But what if Joe doesn't?" I interrogated.

"Oh, don't!" she implored.

It was quite a week before she came again. It was twilight. She sank down in the depths of a chair and regarded the fire pensively.

"Well, she's gone."

"Gone?" I echoed.

"Yes, this morning. Say!" this plaintively, "it's not my fault if people persist in intruding on my privacy, is it? Anybody might know I am in that big chair in the library whenever I get a chance. Last night Joe and Rachel were out walking. They came in and stood by the parlor grate. They were still so long I came pretty near asking them what was the matter."

"At last Joe said, 'Do you suppose two people could live on fifteen hundred a year?'"

"A great many do, don't they?" Rachel questioned.

"Oh, yes, on two hundred, for

that matter. But I mean—oh, well, I mean you and I, Rachel, to put it bluntly. I know it sounds sordid and hard, but if a man dares enough to put away his selfishness and carelessness, yes, and even his pride, to begin life so humbly, and the girl he brings his miserable little offer to is willing to take its humiliations and struggles, then there is something back, stronger than either of them. I have been fighting for six months to find out which was the stronger, my reason or it. When you came, I wonder if reason fled? I feel there is nothing in heaven or earth I have not the courage to face with you. Oh, I want you, my dear, I want you!"

Betty's voice had grown dramatic and tender to the point of tears.

"What did she say?" I asked, eagerly.

Again Betty looked at me reproachfully. "Do you think I would have been so mean as to listen?" she asked. "I put my hands over my ears and simply slid out.

"This morning, when we put her on the train, she pulled me down and whispered: 'You millionth girl! I don't care what you say or when you say it, now.'

"I thought, 'Now for some dramatic effect,' so I waited until they were all there at luncheon. Then I told my story. Maybe it wasn't a bombshell! Mamma jumped up and shook me, she was so excited.

"'Betty Manning!' she gasped. 'Oh, Betty!'

"Then she turned on Joe. 'Have you let her go without saying anything?' she demanded.

"Papa took off his glasses and said,

'Great Scott!' George smiled sarcastically. 'Well, by Jove, that's rather neat, Joe,' he remarked. 'I believe Sis told you.'

"Joe never said a word, but he turned awfully white and left the room."

She stopped and gazed into the fire thoughtfully, then went on in a subdued voice:

"He came down here with me just now. He positively did not look natural. He was so white and worried-looking. Finally he broke out:

"'This is horrible, Betty. What am I to do? I had planned Arcady, and now——'

"'Horrible, Joe?' I gasped. 'What do you mean? Why, it's a fairy tale. You can't imagine the luxury and the money. Wait until you see Rachel there. She's a very queen!'

"'That's it exactly,' he answered, awfully stern. 'I don't fancy the position of prince consort.'

"Then he turned round and sailed off with his head in the air. I think he quite forgot me. I ran after him and caught his arm.

"'You seem to forget the girl Rachel,' I whispered.

"He never said a word, but after a minute he tucked my hand under his arm and brought me here. At the door he stooped and kissed me, and—his face was wet." Her voice trailed off softly.

"Heaven vouchsafes us to build better than we know, sometimes," she murmured, half to herself, after a long pause. Then she lapsed into thought, and by so much as a movement I did not disturb her, for Betty seldom thinks.



MR. PARVENU

HE struts in unfamiliar walks,
And all to him seems funny.
He's not content that money talks,
He talks about his money.

J. J. O'CONNELL.

LA CENDRE

Par Jean de Launay

Mademoiselle Paule Cessain à mademoiselle Folorne, de la Comédie-Française.

CHÈRE AMIE: Te souviens-tu de moi, au moins? Nous avons été très camarades, au cours de madame Gaillard, où nous préparions côte à côte ce fameux *examen de seize ans*, aussi terrible qu'inutile. Mais il y a si longtemps déjà: cinq ans! Nous ne nous sommes ni revues, ni écrit; ou plutôt, si, je t'ai revue et applaudie, au théâtre. Mais toi: tu as dû accumuler tant de souvenirs par-dessus le mien, en ces cinq années-là! Enfin, cherche au fond du sac, et tâche de retrouver, en même temps, un peu de cette bonne amitié que tu me marquais alors: j'en ai tant besoin!

Ce que je veux t'avouer est horriblement difficile à dire. Imagine-toi que, quand j'écris, je vois toujours la figure de la personne qui lira ma lettre. C'est très gênant. Ainsi, en ce moment, tu es devant moi, avec ce joli sourire "rouge et blanc" dont parlent tous les chroniqueurs, et que j'ai connu bien avant eux. Mais je m'attarde, je temporise bien inutilement. Voici: je me suis éprise de ton grand camarade Favère.

J'aurais dû garder ce secret au plus profond de moi-même. Mais l'idée que tu vis à côté de lui, que tu le vois, que tu lui parles, me contraint de m'ouvrir à toi. Il me semble que tu peux, mieux que personne au monde, me comprendre et m'excuser.

Et puis, ce coup de folie me semble si extraordinaire qu'il ne me paraît pas coupable.

Je voudrais le connaître, l'entendre prononcer des paroles qui soient de lui, le voir s'exprimer avec des gestes naturels.

Figure-toi qu'entre mes parents, je n'ose pas parler de lui, tant j'ai peur qu'on découvre mon secret dans ma voix.

Quel âge peut-il avoir? Quarante-cinq ans, n'est-ce pas? Et comme il est beau! Ce que j'aime en lui, c'est sa force, sa voix si grave et si sobre, son aspect si sérieux, si différent de celui des "petits jeunes" étriqués, veules et voûtés. J'aime la brosse drue de ses cheveux, d'une couleur si spéciale d'un gris de fer, comme une forêt de fils d'acier.

Je voudrais qu'il soit aussi près de moi que la jumelle m'en donne l'illusion. Lorsque je le regarde ainsi, je suis toujours tentée d'avancer la main, comme si j'allais le toucher.

Enfin, tout son charme est peut-être factice autant que celui d'un décor, mais Favère n'en représente pas moins à mes yeux la force musculaire achevée, complète, avec sa prestance et sa voix sobre, sa chevelure à peine grisonnante.

Je suis hantée par lui. J'ai peur d'en rêver tout haut. Je ruse pour que les miens m'emmènent à la Comédie les soirs où il joue.

Parfois, il me prend envie de me marier, afin de pouvoir aller librement au théâtre.

Voilà bien des folies! Eh bien! il me semble que si je le voyais tout près, comme je me vois dans la glace, cette fièvre serait apaisée. Je ne demande pas plus: le voir. Parce que cela me paraît possible, à peine coupable.

Aujourd'hui, je n'ai pas pu résister

à ce désir tenace. Je lui ai envoyé un petit bleu signé: "Une jeune admiratrice" et je lui ai donné rendez-vous au square Louvois, pour demain, à cinq heures.

J'ai choisi ce coin-là parce qu'il est proche de son théâtre, et qu'il me paraît tranquille, entouré de rues à maisons calmes comme une petite province.

J'irai m'asseoir là avec ma femme de chambre qui ignore, d'ailleurs, tout mon secret. Je le verrai ainsi en plein jour, de bien près, sans me faire connaître.

Je le laisserai partir, mais je suis sûre que je serai plus calme ensuite.

Maintenant, toi, dis-moi, je t'en prie: crois-tu qu'il viendra? Il doit être entouré de tant d'hommages, recevoir tant de déclarations, de rendez-vous!

Surtout, ne lui dis pas que c'est moi "la jeune admiratrice." J'en mourrais de honte.

Mais tu connais ses habitudes. Tâche de savoir s'il me répondra. Et puis, donne moi des détails sur lui. Ne crains pas d'en "mettre huit pages," tu sais, comme dans nos *styles*.

Merci d'avance, ma chère et glorieuse amie, et ne te moque pas trop de ta folle compagne de cours.

PAULE CESSAIN.

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*Mademoiselle Folorne à mademoiselle
Paule Cessain.*

MA CHÈRE PAULE: Quelle surprise m'apporte ta lettre! Si je me souviens de toi? Quelle question! J'ai regretté bien souvent de ne plus te revoir. Mais je te croyais mariée, mère de famille, que sais-je! Et puis le théâtre m'a prise, et voilà que je retrouve cette petite Paule Cessain, jadis si réservée, si sage, toujours *première*, voilà que je la retrouve en admiration devant Favère.

Sais-tu que tu me places dans une situation très difficile, ma pauvre chérie?

D'abord, tu m'obliges à dénigrer ce grand Favère: entre camarades, c'est évidemment une occupation qu'on ne se refuse guère, mais dont la preuve écrite peut devenir dangereuse pour une débutante qui a quelque ambition.

Ensuite, ne vas-tu pas t'étonner de recevoir d'une comédienne des conseils de sagesse et de prudence? Je ne puis guère t'en donner d'autres, cependant. Ton aventure est celle de milliers de petits cœurs dupes de la même illusion. On a cent fois compté les déboires de celles qui veulent approcher les comédiens chargés de succès et . . . d'années.

(Il est vrai que comme tu as été très sévèrement élevée et qu'on ne t'a rien laissé lire, tu dois ignorer ces précédents.)

Mais, pour éviter à la fois une pédanterie déplacée et une médisance dangereuse, je vais te raconter un petit fait, un peu risible, pas mal mélancolique et symbolique tout à fait.

Mais, d'abord, laisse-moi te dire la vérité tout simple: ne t'assois pas au square Louvois cet après-midi. C'est un assez vilain coin, quoi qu'il te paraisse. Et puis tu n'y trouverais pas Favère. Et enfin, l'eusses tu trouvé, qu'il t'aurait paru ce qu'il est: un vieillard.

Maintenant, j'arrive à ma petite histoire:

Sais-tu ce que Favère a fait de ton petit bleu, de tous les petits bleus semblables qu'il peut recevoir?

Il les brûle, les petits bleus, dans une coupe de porcelaine; puis, avant d'entrer en scène, il verse une goutte de glycérine dans le creux de sa main, y recueille les cendres des petits bleus, frictionne l'une contre l'autre ses paumes, qu'il passe enfin sur la brosse de ses cheveux blancs, ce qui leur donne cette couleur gris noir, gris acier, que tu admires tant.

Favère prétend que la cendre de petits bleus n'a pas sa pareille pour cette teinture de la dernière heure. Elle donne aux cheveux, à l'entendre, ce brillant, cette nuance indécise que rien autre ne leur saurait prêter.

Voilà, ma pauvre chérie, ce que deviennent les déclarations d'amour dépêchées à l'illustre Favère: il s'en teint ses cheveux blancs.

Entre nous, je crois que les petits bleus sont . . . trop verts.

Ne t'avais-je pas dit que l'histoire était risible, mélancolique et symbolique?

Je suis sûre qu'elle te fera plus réfléchir que les plus austères conseils, que j'eusse été, d'ailleurs, mal venue de te donner.

C'est avec cette certitude que je t'embrasse—tu le permets—sur la fleur bien pure de tes deux joues.

Ton amie,
J. FOLORNE.



À UNE "PERLE DES BLANCHES"

O SWEET, pale rose,
With heart of flame
And pure-lipped
Petals
Rare!

Blush thou to richer crimson,
And a whispered
Message
Bear

To her who, queen
Of maids and flowers,
Doth reign
Serenely
Fair.

Say—if, like thine,
Her life's sweet tide
Steal softly
To her
Cheek—

Say she doth wake
In thee, and thou
With rapture
Dumb dost
Seek

To tell thy heart's
Sweet madness that
Thy lips turn
Pale to
Speak.

THOMAS FARRELL DEVINE.

THE COVERT

OH, sharp drives the rain for me,
 Bitter the long night's pain for me,
 Bitter the dawn's disdain for me,
 And breath so vain a prayer!

But open your heart and let me in.
 The deep of your soul, oh, set me in!
 And Sorrow of Life shall forget me in
 The hiding of your hair.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.



HER PREFERENCE

JACK—Don't you think that woman, as a rule, prefers a man who is her master?

ETHEL—Not at all. She prefers one who thinks he is.



COMEDY

I HAVE known griefs that burned my heart out; those
 That leave red footprints where their sad path goes;
 But this is grief, indeed, that we, whom Love
 Crowned and caressed and made great monarchs of,
 Should stand and watch him dying—aye, nor give
 Or look or touch or word to bid him live.
 Lo, this is worst of all, that you and I
 Can stand and *laugh, laugh, laugh* to see him die.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



THE GOOD FIGHT

PASTOR—What did you think of my sermon on pugilism?

BROOKS—It was first-rate. You got in some daisy smashes.

WOLVES IN THE FOLD

By Rosalie M. Jonas

THE Sherry cottage, convivial but in name, gave board, lodging and more than parental supervision to some thirty art students, and board alone to those in the adjoining cottages who did not care to add to the pangs of art the pains of housekeeping. There were also admitted on sufferance a few superfluous, not easily detached mothers and an occasional husband or father, ministers preferred.

Here was the headquarters of the "clan," a sort of closed corporation, composed of restless, dissatisfied society girls from the metropolis, who took up art as they—poor victims of an unresourceful training—would clutch at anything to save them from themselves.

These formed about the defenseless and genuinely artistic Hunt what may be termed a hollow square, through which the unclassified art aspirant from more distant quarters of the continent broke only at her peril.

A Miss Mathilda Flint—one of the Philadelphia Flints—headed the clan in the guise of housekeeper of the Sherry cottage, but really as a bulwark of conventionality—a sort of brake attached to Pegasus.

For whatever dreams of Barbizon, echoes of Concarneau, or simple longing—longing for the broad, free fellowship of art—had prompted the original projectors of the Hamlet, there had settled heavily down upon it a truly Anglo-American atmosphere of snobbism—English in its want of humorous perception, American in lack of the artistic.

Toward this Summer home of art,

one sultry afternoon, there lurched a small omnibus from the railroad station.

Inside was a girl who thrilled with the color of the moorlands, and her mother, who was less enthusiastic.

"Picturesque!" sniffed the latter, scornfully. "Well, if everlastin' God-forsaken sand-heaps, stretchin' straight out to eternity, make picturesqueness, I don't see what we've left home for."

"Oh, mawmer! you know we haven't any Hunt or art atmosphere down South."

Mrs. Aiken sniffed more vigorously. "Is this gale of win' the 'atmosphere' you're lookin' for? If it is, excuse me!"

She was the remnant of a dashing Southern belle and beauty of the war-time, and retained the dash, but the tight-waisted figure and golden hair were now only effective from the rear, and jarred painfully with the face, which, glimpsed even through the thickly dotted veil and in the waning daylight, was far from youthful.

The sky had faded to an even pallor, and some quaintly foreign little cottages, melting into it, made soft-veiled notes of grayness.

"Gracious!" cried Mrs. Aiken, "look at all those shingle shanties huddled up together on that hill yonder."

"The Hamlet!" gasped Arbeta, delightedly, for there, mirage-like in the mist, which had been stealing landward from the ocean, was the goal toward which she had been striving for months.

A little later, as the newcomers

entered the dining-room, and Miss Flint's sharp eyes encountered them, the pink sunburn on her face flushed to a mottled red, and an expression of austere condemnation seemed to petrify it. This was in turn reflected upon the faces of her satellites along the festive board, and in the solemn silence that ensued Mrs. Aiken's high-heeled shoes clicked boisterously on the polished floor as, with her glittering head held high, she crossed the room and took her seat at table.

Arbeta followed more timidly, a little chilled by the reception, but quite unconscious of any personal slight intended.

"Ain't these Nawtherners col'-blooded?" whispered her mother, with an offended sniff.

Arbeta flushed, but sipped her soup in silence.

"I hope you ain't goin' to burn yourself all co'se and red-lookin'," rippled on the maternal voice in dulcet tones, as Mrs. Aiken surveyed the disapproving clan with equal but more politely veiled disapprobation. "Look, quick!" she nudged, excitedly; "here's one real young gentleman down there, opposite. Ain't he handsome, but don't he look kinder out of place and funny in this hen pawty?"

The girl gazed directly at him with the narrow, impersonal, artistic gaze her mother could not comprehend and hated.

"I reckon you can get him to sit for you, Beta, without squintin'," she said, with a sardonic chuckle.

"Carlo Dolci's 'Annunciation Angel' in the flesh, by Jove!" mused Archie Grierson, making an heroic effort to look away into the freckled face beside him.

It was her own fault, as Miss Flint repeatedly reproached herself.

She alone was to blame for such an innovation, in the first place, as that of permitting her nephew, Archie Grierson—reckless New Yorker that he was—to bring his golden Vandyke beard, carefully artistic "get up"

and dangerous laxity of manner, to the Hamlet.

However, she might plead for this that "claims of family" were yet to be ignored by a Flint of Philadelphia; that it was high time Archie settled down after two years of Latin Quartering in godless Paris, and that the clan were rich and highly eligible.

But how lax—how criminally lax—had been her rule when she had permitted these two "flighty Southerners," concerning whom one could not possibly know anything, to smuggle themselves under her very nose into the sacred precincts of the Sherry cottage.

The consequences might have been foreseen.

Here was Archie following tamely at the heels of this absurdly nicknamed little nobody, with the impossible mother, and when he was not trying to sketch what he called her "angel face," she was making really excellent studies of him.

For there was no doubt of one thing, the girl had talent—considering her advantages. Miss Flint always modified her approval.

The fact was, Beta had had the rare good luck, "down South," to get a fair start in the right direction, which is, for the young art student, of all things the most important.

It had happened in this way:

Tired of the girl's "everlastin' messin' with charcoal and things," and being herself in the first flush of widowhood and independence, Mrs. Aiken sent Beta to a boarding-school at some distance from her native town, where they had recently acquired as drawing teacher a student from the Art League of New York, in answer to an advertisement worded as follows:

WANTED—For the Tuckagee Female Seminary, a lady to instruct in painting and drawing; must be over twenty-five years of age, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a graduate of the Art League, New York City; terms, five hundred and twenty-five dollars a year, washing included.

Naturally, the student who responded was not a shining light in her profession. But she had been thoroughly drilled in the right methods and preserved through everything the energy and enthusiasm necessary to enforce them, even in a community where the enlargement of a picture card was the ideal of art.

Under the new order Arbeta went ahead with strides, sending home "studies from life" executed almost guiltily behind closed doors in the inner sanctum of the young ladies' seminary.

These Mrs. Aiken carefully concealed from view of her sensitive-souled "gentlemen callers," and the end of it all was, as she said she might have expected, Beta's head was so filled with "awt nonsense" that she had no taste for "society," as exemplified by the undersized, sallow-faced beaux of the vicinity; and instead of making her debut on the well-trodden field of many maternal triumphs, the girl had pleaded to come "up Nawth and waste her time and clo'es on this ridic'lous awt class, with nothin' in sight but a couple of preachers and one single, solitary man."

"Yes, but *what* a man! If I could only 'get' him!" sighed Arbeta.

"Why, Beta Aiken! I declare, you sound awful! Anybody who didn't know you never look at a gentleman, 'cept to see if he'll do to paint, would think you were dead in love with Mr. Grierson and wanted to ketch him."

"Oh! don't I?" cried the girl, and once more her mother gave up "tryin' to understan' her."

She was an even more tormenting enigma to Archie.

"I'm the same as all the girls to you, no more," he said, tentatively, one September morning, as they walked together through the tall burnt grass that swayed against her pink paint-apron.

"All the girls' don't like me," she smiled, a little sadly. As she spoke she noted how the brown beret he wore crushed down his yellow hair and took the color out of it.

He was carrying her paint-box and easel with his own, while she had

seized on both their large, bare canvases, and as she held them high above her head, to catch the wind, they were like two white wings that bore her lightly onward.

"The other girls are all jealous, 'Dolci's Angel,'" he said, teasingly, but with reverent eyes. She was not listening.

"How I would love to paint you," she said, "with that gorgeous russet-colored Indian from the 'Reservation' somewhere in the background to 'throw you out.'"

"Put him in the foreground and 'throw me out' altogether; I should hate to overshadow the half-breed," growled Archie.

"Oh! you wouldn't overshadow him," she said, reassuringly; "you'd both gain."

Archie would have been a hopeless prig without his saving sense of humor.

"If you really think *that*," he said, solemnly, "we'd be overjoyed to pose together."

Beta laughed outright, then heaved a despairing little sigh:

"Oh! but I'll never 'get' you."

How the art terms tantalized him!

"If you feel discouraged," he said, gloomily, "think of my daring attempts to get you!"

"S'pose we give each other up," she drawled, with a reversion to the maternal accent, which was not habitual to her.

"I—I can't," he faltered.

"Well, that's the right spirit; Hunt says: 'Perseverance conquers all things.'"

"Original of Hunt," snarled Archie, goaded to desperation. "Why, Hunt himself can't——"

"Do me?" suggested Beta, sweetly.

Behind them, at some distance, straggled the class, costumed with that inartistic eccentricity of which only an art class is capable.

There was something ludicrously pathetic in the stoutly middle-aged or angular forms among them, sun-bonneted and pinafores, trundling after them little toy express wagons filled with the apparently disproportionate

amount of artistic paraphernalia that went to the making of even the simplest sketch.

With that instinct for selection which characterized them they would trudge miles to seek a particular pump or fence-rail against which to prop some dull-colored, flat-chested nonentity of an unprofessional model. This same pump and fence-rail had done service until even the tireless Hunt had sickened, and, recklessly neglecting to consult Miss Flint's peculiar views as to what moral and social qualifications she considered necessary for the position, had wired desperately to New York:

Send down professional model, with figure and coloring.

Such a one had been shipped so promptly that she was even now being welcomed most hospitably by Mrs. Aiken on the front porch of the Sherry cottage, Miss Flint having gone, all unsuspecting, to the larger village near at hand, on a foraging expedition, and the class dotting the distant landscape, as aforesaid.

"Come on up," called down Mrs. Aiken, from her rocking-chair on the porch, to the superb, ill-dressed figure hesitating with one foot on the step below. "Come right on up and sit down. You look tired to death. When did you get here?"

"By the 3.30 express, madam," said the model.

"Why, I heard that tootin' by two hours ago."

"Yes; it took me all of that to walk here from the station."

"You don't mean to say you walked all the way from the deepot!" cried Mrs. Aiken, aghast. "Well, no wonder you're worn out; why, for goodness' sake, didn't you take the bus?"

The model flushed painfully. "I'm to pose here for a month, but I wasn't paid a penny in advance, and——"

"Oh, excuse me," cried Mrs. Aiken, a real flush of pity and mortification mounting to her cheeks. "I forgot you were English—you are, ain't you?—and English people don't think

a thing of walkin'; they *like* it, don't they?"

"You're a jolly good sort," said the model, gratefully, sinking into the armchair pushed toward her. "I'm not quite fit, really. I've been very bad, you know."

"I reckon we ain't speakin' the same language," said Mrs. Aiken, laughing a little confusedly; "anyway, I ain't your father confessor. If this shanty was half as good as its name I'd have somethin' besides tea to offer you. I reckon Miss Flint'll let me order *that*; you look pretty near sick for it."

"I *have* been quite bad," repeated the model, "but I'm well now, thanks, only tired."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Aiken, enlightened, and rose hurriedly to call the maid.

A college-bred half-breed, by name Nora, answered her summons, very deliberately.

"Bring this lady some tea out here, right away," commanded Mrs. Aiken; "she's 'most fainted, she's so tired."

"Miss Flint does not permit me to receive orders from anyone but herself," said Nora, without stirring.

"You go and do like I tell you, and I'll settle with Miss Flint," said Mrs. Aiken.

"Oh, if you will take the entire responsibility," and Nora disappeared, with a toss of the head, but submission in her eye.

"My!" exclaimed Mrs. Aiken, awe-stricken, "where *do* you reckon that nigger got her way of speakin'?"

Twenty minutes later Miss Flint, driving herself and her purchases homeward, suddenly confronted the scene on her porch, and stopped with a jerk that almost sent her down hill again.

For there, chattering, laughing and tea-drinking before her very face and in the public eye, was Mrs. Aiken, in a figured blue sateen trimmed elaborately with white lace, a large shade hat, long, tan-colored gloves, and the dotted veil, and on the opposite side of a small tea-table drawn up cozily

between was an unknown woman, a younger and more natural looking blonde—but still a blonde—decked out in the cheap, untidy finery of the middle-class Englishwoman.

Rigid with righteous indignation, Miss Flint descended from her phaeton and mounted the front steps of the Sherry cottage with the heavy and unswerving tread of justice.

"Here she is now!" cried Mrs. Aiken, cheerfully, at sight of her. "Let me introduce Mlle. Picard, Miss Flint, the new model; she's all English but her name, though. I took the liberty of orderin' some tea for her. She looked as white as wax when she first came, but she's got a lovely color now, ain't she?"

It was very little satisfaction to ignore Mrs. Aiken, for she was always so cheerfully unconscious of being ignored, but Miss Flint invariably made a point of doing it.

"Who engaged you?" she demanded, suspiciously, of the model.

"Mr. Hunt telegraphed for her himself," interposed Mrs. Aiken, before the latter could answer. "I reckon he was sick and tired of the gawky, washed-out lookin' things they've been havin' here right along, and she's posed for some of the first artists over yonder in Europe."

Miss Flint heard nothing but the voice of her authority seriously threatened and up in arms, but Mrs. Aiken went on, placidly:

"I tol' Beta only las' Monday I jus' couldn't stan' another criticism day, I was so worn out sittin' in the bare studio on a camp stool without a back, squintin' for hours at a sort of crazy-quilt pattern of cabbage rows an' colicky cows, an' freaky-lookin' models painted purple in sunlight an' mud color in shadder——"

Still Miss Flint was silent. Through season after season of undisputed sway she had grown to feel herself supreme and Hunt merely a necessary adjunct to attract the ordinary student population to the Hamlet; now he had dared do this! But that he *was* the magnet she well knew, and in her heart she realized that the powers behind

the throne might—if it came to a choice between them—sacrifice even a Flint to retain a Hunt.

"I was not aware that you were to board here," she said, gathering herself together with an effort and looking significantly at the tea things. She could, at least, make it disagreeable for the model.

But Mlle. Picard had undergone a curious transformation since Miss Flint's appearance on the scene.

Between embarrassment and resentment she had adopted a sort of swaggering self-assertiveness that was distinctly vulgar, and of which there had not been a trace in her manner up to now.

Even her rich voice had coarsened and hardened, and her accent slurred a little with excitement as she answered, bluntly:

"This lidy arsked me to stop to tea with 'er wile I waited for the 'ousekeeper, and I stopped—that's all."

Mrs. Aiken was embarrassed. "She don't mean any harm, Miss Flint," she murmured, apologetically; "she's jus'—English."

Miss Flint's rage was never uncontrollable; she was resolved to fight these two conspirators to the death, but with secret weapons.

"Your pose commences at nine o'clock each morning and lasts till one," she said now, in her natural voice, which was a hard one. "You will probably find a room engaged for you at the Dodds' farm-house at the foot of the hill. Good day."

"Good day," said the model, shortly; then turning to Mrs. Aiken, she put out her hand, the gentle look coming back into her eyes.

"Thank you so much for your kindness, madam," she said.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mrs. Aiken, heartily; "it's been a real pleasure to have somebody to talk to. Even Arbeta ain't got an idea in her head but paint."

As the graceful figure of the model descended the steps, Miss Flint noted with added disfavor that she held her long skirt most disgracefully high

and that there were three buttons missing on her right boot.

"I don't know what Hunt was dreaming of to have a creature of that class down here," she muttered into space.

"What class?" asked Mrs. Aiken, innocently.

Miss Flint disdained a direct answer.

"It would be bad enough," she soliloquized, "if there were only girls, but there's—Archie."

A little ripple of laughter broke from Mrs. Aiken.

"Oh! I reckon she won't hurt Archie any," she said.

Miss Flint glared at her directly now.

"You are familiar with my nephew on a *very* short acquaintance," she sneered.

Mrs. Aiken was no fool, and having recognized Miss Flint as an enemy at first sight, her sole diversion since her arrival had been in "gettin' even" with her.

"Oh! we're real good friends by now," she replied, with her irritating ingenuousness. "I really don't know what Beta and me'd have done without him, 'specially as there ain't another soul up here that's sociable. I asked him the other day how it come Nawthern gentlemen were so much easier to get acquainted with than Nawthern ladies, and he said, 'Maybe the girls up here are afraid you'll spoil trade for 'em.' He's right cynical for such a young feller, ain't he?"

Miss Flint swallowed her gall and wormwood silently, but with a bitter face; and before nightfall the clan were gathered, armed and put on the alert to protect Archie from this new accession to the enemy—the bold, bad model with the compromising French name.

The next morning, Arbeta, who was the elect of Hunt to pose the model for the class, chose a field of gorgeous tiger-lilies as background for this human tiger-lily, gowned in long loose folds of yellowish pink cashmere that "toned in" marvelously with the surrounding color.

After many futile efforts to reproduce her, the class grew almost universally antagonistic, and called her "coarse," "unpaintable," "inartistic,"—art terms that are sometimes synonymous for what is hopelessly out of reach.

Even Beta, to her anguish, could not do her in a way to satisfy herself; but Archie, with a sort of inspiration, made a quick color sketch that was by all odds the best thing he had ever done.

It was "just luck," he protested, with some real modesty, when Beta praised it.

"You never did anything half so good before," she asserted, bravely, but there was a queer little tremor in her voice that puzzled him, and she was conscious of a most unaccountable prejudice against the thing—could it be contemptible jealousy of a brother artist?

On the sixth day of her posing, the doom of the model descended at last. She had been standing, with short rests, for several hours. It was very hot, and the clan had nagged her most persistently.

Suddenly, into the stillness, from across the fields there broke a loud, masculine, aggressive voice.

"I say, I don't like the color of her gown!" it shouted, and up strode Miss Hudnut, booted, hatted, coated and red-vested in man's attire; even her skirt was exceptionally short and obviously divided.

She was not an art student, but as the owner of much real estate and the most elaborate cottage in the Hamlet, she was a power second only to Miss Flint.

The model turned her violet eyes wearily in her direction.

"I posed in it for Sir Frederick Leighton," she said, persuasively.

"I don't care, *I* don't like it," said Miss Hudnut.

The clan chorused eagerly after her:

"No, *we* don't like it, either."

The model flashed blue lightning over the entire group, and the devil broke loose in her.

"I don't give a damn whether you like it or not!" she said, deliberately.

That night she got her dismissal.

"But I was engaged for a month," she protested, with the swagger she always adopted in Miss Flint's presence.

"You will take the money I offer you for six days' posing, now or not at all," said Miss Flint, firmly. "After your disgraceful conduct it would be perfectly just to give you nothing."

"Keep it, then!" cried the model. "It wouldn't more than pay my fare back to New York, and what do you suppose I'm to do when I get there?"

"Oh! *you* won't *starve*!" said Miss Flint.

Two days later the Hamlet was shaken by a moral earthquake—Mlle. Picard had committed suicide!

At the first breath of uncertainty as to the model's fate an enterprising young reporter from a New York newspaper rushed down to the retired little Hamlet, and lo! the papers glared with gruesome headlines, and one article was illustrated by a likeness of Miss Flint herself thrusting a trembling female form, in very light attire, from the Sherry cottage, while the art class, in their pinafores and sun-bonnets, stood on the porch and pelted the victim with paint tubes.

The clan had brazened it out till this, but now they fled precipitately, leaving Miss Flint to brave the onslaught of reporters alone.

She disdained all belief in the tragedy, even when she had personally interviewed the railroad officials, the boatmen along the coast and passers-by on the highway, who unanimously denied having seen trace of the missing model. Only when Mlle. Picard's straw hat was found on a cliff at the very edge of the sea did she accept the situation; then, with a set look on her face, she mounted to the tiny attic chamber at the Dodds', ghostly now with the presence of a little shabby trunk and the few belongings left undisturbed there, where she suffered horribly but silently at the birth of

something like a soul in her that would not sleep again.

In the horror and excitement of the time, only Arbeta saw any significance in the fact that Archie had happened to "run up to town" the very evening of the model's disappearance.

The Hamlet was grown hateful to the girl, and Mrs. Aiken cheerfully agreed that they should leave it at once and forever.

Miss Flint, broken-spirited, said good-bye to them almost politely, and Beta fancied that for one instant, as she shook hands with her, she saw her own terror reflected in the woman's eyes.

As they drove away in the ramshackle 'bus, the deserted little Hamlet, shutting in its human tragedy to the final exclusion even of Art, looked almost ghastly in the twilight, and Miss Flint's form stood out alone on the porch of the Sherry cottage, erect and spare against the sky line.

"Well, it's civilized *her*!" exclaimed Mrs. Aiken, triumphantly, as they jolted off.

"Do you mean the model's death?" asked Beta, trembling a little.

"She ain't dead," said her mother, calmly.

Beta had never fainted in her life, but she had hardly strength to whisper, white-lipped: "Where are they, then?"

"How'd you guess he was along? I thought you didn't believe the suicide business, but I didn't dare tell you a thing about it before, because I knew, if they once missed him and began putting their names together, you'd come out with the whole thing—you couldn't have helped it. You see, I ain't afraid of a man's reputation gettin' much hurt by anything short of murder, and I was boun' to save that po', pretty creature when she came runnin' straight to me the night Miss Flint sent her off and insulted her. When she tol' me what she'd said to her I'd helped her get even if I'd had to pawn my weddin' ring, and when I saw the desp'rate look in her blue eyes I made up my min' *how*, that minute."

"Archie—Mr. Grierson—?" murmured Beta.

"I'm comin' to him now. 'You wait here,' I said to Mlle. Picard, 'and I'll get the only man in the place to help us, if he *is* Miss Flint's kin.' I didn't tell him any of the details of my scheme; I hadn't got 'em all fixed in my own min' then, and they kinder worked *themselves* out later, anyway. I jus' tol' him enough about the way his aunt had acted to make him red-hot—he ain't got much use for her himself, I reckon—and I made him sneak the model off in his own sail-

boat, after dark, when nobody was roun', sail her across the bay, take the train to New York from that little town on the other side, and put her on the firs' steamer sailin' for her native lan', which is Chester, Englan'."

"I—I hope they'll be happy," murmured Beta, miserably.

"Are you crazy, Beta Aiken? You don't think he's crossed with her, do you?"

"Well, where is he?" asked the girl, dazed.

"He? Oh, I reckon *he'll* meet us in New Yaw City—at the deepot."



HEART TO SOUL

SAID a woman's Soul to a woman's Heart:
 "I shall live forever, but dust thou art;
 And despite the fires to-day that burn,
 To-morrow thou'lt die and to dust return."

But the Heart replied to the Soul and said:
 "Though alive to-day and to-morrow dead,
 My day of life is worth to me
 Thy endless years of eternity.

"For I live and love and suffer woe—
 Though thou liv'st forever thou canst not know.
 And my day of life be bitter or sweet,
 No final reckoning have I to meet.

"The flowers will bloom from my dust and sing,
 'From a Heart that lived but a day we spring.'
 And I laugh and love and sin, and say:
 'It does not matter, the Soul shall pay.'"

MATALIE BROWN.



NOT ALONE

MISS WITHERS—I believe Arthur is afraid to propose to me.
 BELLE—Of course he is, and there are thousands of others just like him.

THE RUBY OF OUDH

By William J. Coffin

I N the stern of the canoe a broad-shouldered, fair-haired Englishman was sitting, dabbing a double-bladed paddle through the water with just sufficient force to keep the nose of the craft against the bank.

In the bow of the boat was an embarrassed, brown-haired girl in a golf suit. She was stripping the leaves from the branch of an overhanging tree and making a little green carpet in the bottom of the canoe.

An air of restraint attended both operations. The paddle did not move with slow precision, as it should. It was jabbed into the water rather carelessly; the leaf carpet was laid with a faltering hand. There was no mistaking the situation. The man had just proposed and been refused. The pair were in that awkward moment which invariably accompanies such circumstances. A man should not propose to a girl while canoeing or driving or doing anything from which there is no immediate escape. He should be mindful of the possibilities of rejection and of the uncomfortable hours it takes to get home.

Lord Crawshaw was thinking of these things too late. He realized that he had been stupid. He might have waited until the cart just reached the *porte-cochère*. Then he could have told her, jumped hastily out and had all the pleasures of anticipation through dinner and perhaps half of the evening before he found her alone.

He stopped swishing the paddle and looked at her.

"Don't you think you could?" he asked.

"Oh, no—never, never, never,"

breathed the girl. She added a few leaves to the carpet. "I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't think you cared—so much."

"Sometimes," said the man, half under his breath, "I have thought that you did."

"Did what?"

"Think that I cared."

"Why, Jimmy!" There did not seem anything incongruous in calling a peer of the realm "Jimmy." There was too much reproach in the tones of the girl's voice.

"Yes," said Lord Crawshaw, "I have thought at times that you knew I cared; and if it's a fair question to ask, were you leading me on?"

"I ought to get mad at you," said the girl, slowly. "I ought to insist on your paddling me down to the boat-house, and I ought to get into that cart and drive home and make you walk. That question would be insufferable from any other man—but you are different. Yes, you really should be suspicious. You're an unprotected lord in America, you're not dead broke and you're quite good-looking. It's only natural for you to think that every girl is after you. I've only known you four days. I've called you Jimmy two of them, and you held my hand ten minutes last night. But I don't think I led you on. You see I couldn't, for I'm in love with another man. Perhaps I have encouraged you, but truly I didn't mean anything."

"I see that I have been a boor," said Lord Crawshaw. "I'm awfully sorry. You know I haven't been long in America, and I must offer that fact as my apology——"

"Oh, don't apologize."

"Then I've sunk too low for an apology? I have offended so deeply that you do not care for me to ask your forgiveness? You simply wish to be rid of me?"

"Not so bad as that. You were rude and horribly thoughtless just now, but I make allowances. It was only natural."

"By Jove, you're a good sort! I thought I was hopelessly in your bad books."

"You're not out of them, by any means," said the girl, "but you aren't in as far as you would be if you were an ordinary American."

"Awfully good of you," sighed Lord Crawshaw; "upon my word, it is. You understand the thing better than I do myself, I believe. You see, when an Englishman, accustomed to chilled femininity, lands over here and meets you American girls, something is bound to happen. I wasn't in love five days ago. I came down to Mrs. Mifflin's, and you were there. In forty-eight hours I was gone, utterly gone. You needn't laugh, Molly, I'm in love with you—dashed if I ain't!—and you know it. You're different, you're so lovable—Gad, Molly!" exploded the Englishman, "isn't there any chance for me?"

The girl added a few more leaves to the carpet and said nothing.

"No, there isn't," continued Lord Crawshaw. "I can see it. Let's change the subject. I'm going away to-morrow and you won't be bothered any more. Molly, look up. Thanks. I love your eyes and the way you do your hair."

"It's getting damp," said Molly.

"Not for an hour or two yet," said Lord Crawshaw. "Have you ever noticed my watch charm?" He unclasped a heavy red stone set in dull gold and passed it to the girl.

"Oh, how funny!" cried Molly.

"It's a peculiar thing, isn't it?" said Lord Crawshaw. "It has quite a history. It's called the Ruby of Oudh; one of my ancestors with Clive got it from an Indian Rajah. It's been in the family, off and on, ever since. It was stolen three times, once

by a man who sold it back to my great-grandfather, and twice by thieves who were caught by the police. My grandfather's butler stole it again, grew remorseful, confessed and then shot himself. That's the only life it has cost, if you bar a civil war in India. It's an uncut ruby, and some people have said it is worth five thousand pounds."

"Oo-oh!" exclaimed Molly. "That's twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Something like that," said Lord Crawshaw, "but of course the money value of the stone isn't so much to me as its traditions and its associations with our family. We're known as the 'Oudh Crawshaws,' though I have never heard of any one of us being in India since the Crawshaw who brought back the stone."

"And you wear this on your watch chain! How do you dare?"

"Oh, I do that just to let the thing know I'm not afraid of it. My father fretted his life out taking care of this bally ruby. But look here, Molly, do you know why I've brought up the subject? It isn't because I wanted to tell you about the Crawshaw jewels. I love you, little girl, and you won't have me. I think I've got perception enough to see that you never would have me. I'm going away to-morrow, and the odds are you'll never see me again. I don't want you to forget me, and I'm going to give you something to remember me by. Molly, I want you to take the Ruby of Oudh."

"Jimmy, you're raving!"

"'Pon my soul, I'm not," affirmed Lord Crawshaw. "I'm in solemn earnest."

"Why, I wouldn't think of such a thing for an instant."

"Why not, Molly? You're surely the girl to have it."

"But, Jimmy, you don't understand. It is impossible for me to accept a gift like that."

"Oh, that's it! If it were a five-dollar stick pin you'd take it, then?"

"No. I couldn't even do that."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm wearing another man's pin."

"What's that to do with mine?"

"Well, you see, Jimmy, he's *the* man, and it's his fraternity pin, and it wouldn't be loyal to him if I took your pin, no matter if it were the Ruby of Oudh or a rhinestone buckle."

"H'm-mm!"

"Isn't this ruby a beauty, though?" said Molly, nestling the jewel in her hands and gazing at it lovingly.

"Let's have it a moment," said Lord Crawshaw. "This gold setting," he continued, "was once part of an Indian bracelet. The ruby was set in the bracelet and was worn by the Rajah's favorite. It is said to be the third oldest historical jewel in existence. So you won't have it, Molly?"

"It was lovely of you to even think of such a thing, but, Jimmy, I really can't."

"All right, little woman. I want you to have it, and only you, and since you won't, I'm going to put it where no other girl can ever get it. Here goes!"

He made a quick motion, and there was a flash through the air, a little splash and then an expanding ripple on the surface of the lake.

"Oh!" she gasped. She turned a white, agonized face to Lord Crawshaw.

"Jimmy, Jimmy," she whispered, "that was ungenerous; it was cruel, Jimmy." Her head went between her hands and she began to sob.

"Oh, come, little woman," said Lord Crawshaw, "I didn't think you would take it this way."

"Paddle me home, Jimmy," sobbed the girl. "Paddle me home. I can never forgive myself. Don't speak to me, please."

Lord Crawshaw whistled softly. Then he leaned forward and attempted to put his hand on Molly's head, but the canoe listed and nearly upset.

"Dash it all!" said Lord Crawshaw, viciously, to the elements. He began to ply the paddle, and the canoe shot down the lake.

Molly spoke only twice on the

homeward journey in the cart. Then she turned a strained face to Lord Crawshaw and asked:

"Why, oh, why did you do it, Jimmy?"

"It was a public nuisance, Molly," answered Lord Crawshaw. "It was a menace to civilization and an encouragement to crime. Besides, I wanted to make sure that no other girl should ever wear the Oudh."

"Brute!" declared Molly. "You didn't think of me."

The drive was finished in silence. When the cart reached the house Molly jumped out, disdaining Lord Crawshaw's assistance. She opened the front door, hesitated, and then closed it carefully again and turned to Lord Crawshaw.

"Jimmy," she whispered, "I like you better than I thought I did."

Then she turned and fled up stairs. She sent down word that she was feeling bad and wouldn't come to dinner. Lord Crawshaw was the object of much mild chaffing. Mrs. Mifflin declared that she would never go canoeing with him, and Miss Ward wished to know if he were equally formidable at golf.

Before bedtime Mrs. Mifflin managed to get Lord Crawshaw into a corner.

"Well?" she inquired, eagerly.

"Very well," said Lord Crawshaw; "most auspicious, in fact. But it isn't done yet. I said that I should require two treatments."

"Tell me about it," demanded Mrs. Mifflin.

"All in good time, dear lady," answered Lord Crawshaw.

Miss Molly Clark breakfasted late the next morning. Apparently the house was empty, but when she finished and wandered out on the piazza she found Mrs. Mifflin and Lord Crawshaw.

"Morning, Molly!" cried Mrs. Mifflin. "Feeling better, dear?"

"Oh, I'm quite well this morning, thank you, Mrs. Mifflin. Good-morning, Jimmy."

"Lord Crawshaw is leaving us to-day, Molly," said Mrs. Mifflin, "and

he's just been telling me a secret. He's going back to England to be married. What do you think of that, Molly? Oh, heavens! There's that wretched Frenchwoman! See you later, people."

Mrs. Mifflin fluttered into the house and Molly turned to Lord Crawshaw.

"Did my ears deceive me?" she asked, "or was it only Mrs. Mif—My goodness!"

"What's the row?" inquired Lord Crawshaw.

"The row?" said Molly, faintly. She rubbed her eyes and looked again. There, on Lord Crawshaw's watch chain, as dry as a bone and as beautiful as ever, glowed the Ruby of Oudh.

Molly sat down abruptly and turned her head away from Lord Crawshaw.

"Yes," pursued that worthy, somewhat guiltily, "it's true. I go back to London next week, and I am to be married in a couple of months."

"What did you throw into the lake?" demanded Molly.

"Perhaps you've heard Mrs. Mifflin speak of my fiancée. She looks like *you*, Molly. Want to see her photograph?"

"What did you throw into the lake?"

"I'll get it for you if you do."

"What did you throw into the lake?"

"Must you know? Look at me and I'll tell you. It was—don't get excited, Molly—it was only a pebble."

There was silence on the veranda for the space of five minutes, while Molly did a lot of thinking. At last she uncovered one eye and turned it on her companion.

"Lord Crawshaw," she said, "if it's a fair question, were you leading *me* on?"

"I shouldn't wonder," chuckled Lord Crawshaw, paternally.



IMPERFECTION

HOW many a perfect song the nightingale
Must know, yet cannot sing!
How many a lyric melody must lie
Deep-hidden, slumbering,
Which e'en this bird whose songs bring forth a tear
Can never let us hear!

How many a golden thought must creep into
The poet's soul, which he
Can never sing for us in measured rhyme,
Whate'er his art may be.
Alas! he weeps that we may never know
The thoughts that thrill him so.

So, if I do not tell thee as I would
The love I bear for thee,
Remember still the longing in my soul,
And only pity me.
For oh! there are some thoughts beyond the reach
Of our imperfect speech!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

THE MOONLIGHT AT EL-KORDO

By C. B. Lewis ("M. Quad")

SOCIETY had been surprised, amazed and shocked, according to its grades of temperament, when the marriage of Colonel Grayson and Helen Adams had taken place. A girl of twenty had married a man of fifty. A man of fifty had made a fool of himself. A girl of twenty had thrown herself away.

It had all come about very suddenly.

She was down on society's books for an alliance with Sir James Hope, but, all of a sudden, that affair was off. Then Colonel Grayson, who had spent half his life in India, suddenly arrived home. His love-making was brief. It had not lasted a month when the engagement was announced, and another month witnessed the marriage.

The characters of both husband and wife were public print. He was stiff, dignified and full of authority. He had governed men for thirty years. He would seek to govern a wife as he had governed men—by military tactics. There would be right face, left face, front, march. She was a girl of spirit, inclined to trample conventionalities under foot and obey only her own will. There would be rebellion.

Few people understood her, because she didn't really understand herself. Sir James had made a study of her and thought he understood her, but his seeming assurance brought about the quarrel that separated them. Pride prevented him from seeking a reconciliation, pique drove her to marry Colonel Grayson. There were arguments almost before they left the altar; there were quarrels before the honeymoon was a week

old. The Colonel was handling his bride according to military tactics. She was rebelling according to her ideas of right and wrong.

One day, when they had been married less than four months, the climax came. There was a bitter quarrel, with aggression on his part and defiance on hers, and she was put under orders. Two hours later she had left the house, and inside of twenty-four she was on her way out of England in the company of her old admirer.

Society had half expected such a *dénouement*, and was not dumfounded. The Colonel had not expected it. He had suppressed mutiny in his command and forced soldiers to become automatons and right face or left face at his will. He couldn't understand why the same rules should not bring the same results in his household.

As a soldier and a man of honor, the Colonel felt that there was but one course for him to pursue. It was only after the bride had fled that he confessed to himself that he had made a mistake from first to last. He put all the fault on his own shoulders and nothing on hers. He could never take her back, but he could forgive her. She had brought him dishonor, but he did not want harm to come to her. These feelings were big in his heart, but he concealed them from the world. He must follow Sir James and overtake and kill him. When this duty was accomplished he would say to the woman:

"I could do no less. Live where you will, I will provide for you. I did not understand you, and I drove

you to this. The world will scorn you, but I shall say no word."

There was a week in which he avoided his fellow-men, that they might not flaunt his dishonor or give him words of sympathy, and then he took up the pursuit. He was calm and imperturbable as he journeyed. There was a man to be killed and a woman to be advised. Nothing but his death could change his plans. He followed them at his leisure. His dishonor would last forever, and it was immaterial whether he killed his man within one month or three.

The track was easy to keep, even when they left for the East. The elopers never became fugitives. They traveled in the broad light of day and as they listed.

The Colonel was two weeks behind them when they reached Alexandria; he had picked up a week when he reached Cairo. There he found that they had gone up the Nile.

It was not that he could not have waited until their return to kill his man, but he had never voyaged up the historic river, and he would now make the trip. They might pass him or he might miss them, but he could pick up the trail again when he returned to Cairo.

When the bride, in distress, came flying to Sir James to seek his protection he was neither overjoyed nor put out. He simply accepted the adventure and suggested a long trip abroad. In his own mind he was satisfied that Colonel Grayson would pursue them and seek his death, but that was part and parcel of the adventure. As a man of the world he knew that the woman would be disgraced forever, but also, as a man of the world, it wasn't his duty to advise wives to continue to live with husbands who did not appreciate them. There was nothing to worry about, and he refused to worry. Even when the runaway wife's conscience began to upbraid her, and she shed tears and forced "scenes" upon him, he philosophically observed that what was done was done, and they must wait in patience for the Colonel to overtake

them. They were not altogether a happy pair, but they had planned a journey, and they continued it, even after they made no further pretense of love.

One night the little steamer tied up at the village of El-Kordo. The new moon had made it almost as light as day. Half a mile away, over the white sands, was a heap of old ruins. The faithless wife had been unusually silent all day. She had come to realize to the fullest extent what the step had cost her, and she had almost determined that the waters of the Nile should hide her shame. As she appeared on deck and saw the moonlight flooding land and river and the columns of the old ruins standing up like shafts to the memory of ancient royalty, she beckoned to Sir James to follow her.

"Take care—there is danger!" warned the captain as the couple stepped ashore; but the woman bowed her head and went forward, and the man followed.

They did not speak a word as they toiled through the heavy sands. They looked neither to the right nor to the left. The man had lighted a cigar as he stepped ashore, but he puffed it so slowly that it was dead before they reached the ruins. Fair in the moonlight was a single block of stone that had been thrown yards beyond its fellows when the earthquake shook the temple to its lowest foundations. On this they sat, with their backs to the heaped-up ruins and the black shadows and their faces toward the muddy river, shining like silver under the white light of heaven.

It was a long while before the woman spoke. The man contemplated his dead cigar and waited for her to break the silence. By-and-by she asked:

"What of the future?"

"Well, what?" he asked in turn, and somehow each drew away from the other.

"Is there any for me?" she queried, with bitterness in her tones, as she rested her face in her hands and felt her eyes hot and dry.

Sir James felt for a match to relight his cigar, but without success. In his search he drew a little further away from her. She noted the movement, and a wave of anger surged into her heart, but she made no sign.

"You—you were married, you know," he finally answered.

"Yes."

"And you left your husband—ran away."

"Yes."

"Ran away with me. We couldn't get married if we wanted to. When we go back——"

"When we go back——" she echoed, as he paused.

"Well, why borrow trouble? We have yet to meet the Colonel. If he has followed us, as he should, he is about due."

In her heart she had long ago forgiven her husband everything—more than forgiven. She had taken all the blame to herself, and thought of him only as injured and dishonored. When he came to stand face to face with her——

Could she lift her eyes to his? Could she bear the shame of it all? She looked down upon the sands at her feet and hoped he would kill them both, but *her* first.

Sir James had drawn away from her again, and a distance of four or five feet now separated them. Her cheeks reddened and her fingers clinched, but she uttered no word. His actions had settled the future for her. Before another day dawned she would drop over the steamer's rail, and the world would forget her.

As she thought of her dead body floating down with the flotsam and jetsam of the mighty stream, she looked up with parted lips at the great moon that was frosting Egypt's blackest acres and hiding ten thousand plague spots with a silver coating. What a grand light! How soft it was! How it turned billions of grains of sand into sparkling diamonds, and how it brought out every graven line of the sentinel columns and told of the skill and the toil of the dead of a thousand years ago!

Under that light of God her heart grew tenderer than she had ever known it before, and she forgave and sought forgiveness from every living soul.

"Come," he said, as he lazily started to his feet, but the word had scarcely passed his lips when there was a rush and a growl, and a lion which had been lurking in the shadow of the ruins bore the man to earth and crouched above his breast. Death had come as the great paws descended.

For a long minute the woman and the lion looked into each other's eyes. Then she slowly rose up and said, speaking as if the beast could understand her words:

"You have taken but one. Here I am! Take me as well!"

The lion growled in his throat, and his tufted tail scattered the sand about.

"I am the guilty one—more guilty than he!" whispered the woman, as she went a step nearer. "It was I you meant to spring upon—you made a mistake."

The lion raised a paw off the dead man's breast and menaced her with it, growling sullenly.

"You shall take both—I say you shall!"

She would have seized his long mane in her outstretched fingers, but he snarled and spat at her and retreated a pace.

"But there must be other lions about," she said, and turning her back on the river she skirted the ruins and walked away over the yielding sands. She went straight on and on, with the mighty desert before her and her long shadow ever keeping pace at her right hand. The lion looked after her and uttered a half-roar that ended in a sort of wail. When she had disappeared over a ridge he crept back to the dead man beside the stone.

It was morning when an ascending steamer reached El-Kordo and tied up beside the other. Yes, such a couple as Colonel Grayson described were passengers, but on the previous

night they had gone out to the ruins and had not returned. A party had been made up to go in search of them, but lions had been seen prowling around, and it had been decided to wait for daylight. Colonel Grayson walked at the head of the party as it set out. At the big block of stone all gathered around what the lion had abandoned an hour before.

"But the woman?" said the Colonel, as he peered among the ruins.

"Here—this way," replied a man, as he caught sight of footprints leading away.

They followed them out on the lonely desert—over the ridges, across the dips, past bush and cacti. Five miles away they found her. She

was lying on her face on the sands, and she was dead and cold. No lion had struck her down, no poisonous serpent had sent his fangs into her flesh. She had prayed God that she might die, and her prayer had been granted.

"You knew the man—who was he?" asked the captain of the steamer, as the Colonel knelt down beside the dead.

There was no answer.

"And the woman—who was she?"

The Colonel covered his face with his hands, and a tear trickled through his fingers.

The pursuit was ended. The moonlight had departed. The dead were dead.



TURN ABOUT

MABEL is home from the sea and sun,
 For an absence long atoning;
 Home for the Winter's romp and fun,
 And the sad, sad waves are moaning.
 She has bathed and basked in the sand and spray,
 With the ocean breezes flouting,
 And now it is time, in the ballroom gay,
 Her shoulders have an outing.

EDWIN L. SABIN.



AFRAID OF WAKING UP

MRS. RIVERTON—Life is a dream, isn't it?

MRS. BRIDGES—It seems like it to me. We've had the same cook nearly two weeks.



OUGHT TO BE EQUAL TO THE JOB

HE—If I should try to kiss you, Miss Maude, would you call for help?

SHE—No; you'd have to help yourself.